



01 신의 노래

산경(山景)
현대판타지 소설

8 완결



주|라온 E&M

SONG OF GOD

- 신의 노래 -

- VOLUME 2 -

-AUTHOR-

San Kyung

Chapter 55

“Do you want me to get an official apology from the people who wrote these articles?”

“Of course. Where is my boss right now?”

“You just spoke with him. He’s resting in a place with fresh air. Stop worrying about him and answer me. You want to get a sincere apology and end it?”

“Are you crazy? End it with something like that? We have to ruin them.”

“How? Should we go beat them up? Set a fire and run?”

“.....”

Jun Hyuk only knew how teenagers fought and did not know how to finish someone without a physical altercation.

He felt how pathetic he was because all he could do was clench his fists and swear.

“Kwang Hun told me that you’re weak against the strong and strong against the weak.”

“What are you talking about?”

Jun Hyuk was questioning whether this lawyer who had been smirking at him since they first met was really someone that his boss trusted. In this situation, he should be expressing anger with him or at least being serious. This man was acting as though he were having fun.

“No? I heard you said that you have to be quick-witted and a coward to survive?”

It was only when Baek Seung Ho threw his cigarette on the floor and put it out with his shoe that he stopped smiling,

“Most people are like that. What are you to do? If I act strong in front of someone with power, I’m the only one who gets hurt, no?”

“So are you a coward too?”

“No, I’m not like that. Do you know why?”

“Just say it. Why do you keep asking me questions?”

“Ha ha. You have a quick temper. Actually, I’m really strong. There’s almost no one stronger than me in Korea.”

“Because you’re a really famous lawyer?”

“Yeah. My company is really famous and huge. If I want to, I can ruin them all.”

“Then you can ruin all of the assholes who wrote these articles?”

“Of course. I’m going to make them crawl. But there’s a problem.”

“What’s that?”

“My company and I don’t exist just to punish bad people. We get paid to do that.”

“I have money. I got \$20,000 as an advertising model. I’ll give you all of it, please ruin them for me.”

“\$20,000? You can’t get someone like me to work for just \$20,000. You have to give me ten times more than that. And even that’s cheap, but it’s because I’m close with Kwang Hun.”

Ten times \$20,000. It was an amount difficult to even imagine. Jun Hyuk had needed to count the zeros in his modeling fee.

“Shit, so what are you telling me to do? I don’t have the money.”

The swearing he had been holding back because this man was his boss’ close friend came out involuntarily. However, the lawyer did not seem to mind. He was smiling again,

“I’ll do it on credit. What do you think?”

“Credit?”

“Yeah. Once this program ends, I’m pretty sure you’ll make money. Pay me back with that money.”

“Alright. Then you tell me.”

“Tell you what?”

“How are you going to finish them?”

Baek Seung Ho thought that he had done enough to prevent Jun Hyuk from quitting the program. Having endurance in order to reach a goal is what it meant to be an adult.

“The best way to finish off an adult is...”

“Money!”

Jun Hyuk spoke before Baek Seung Ho finished his sentence.

“That’s right. You’re smart. The best way to ruin an adult is to take his money. Not by stealing it, but in a legal way. That’s exactly what a lawyer like me does. Our job is to lawfully take money, which is what adults consider most important.”

Taking their money. Jun Hyuk remembered when he had mugged kids on the street. There were more people who fought back for their money than they did to avoid getting hit. They fought back harder the more money they had in their pockets. Adults were not different.

“You have to act as if you don’t know anything about what’s going on. You’ll understand because you’ve gotten into fights before. When the opponent is throwing punches like crazy, you have to step back for a second and wait until he’s tired out before you give that last swing. That’s what I’m going to do. These guys aren’t tired enough yet. In exactly 10 days from now, they’re going to be still because they’re tired. That’s when I’m going to finish them. You understand?”

“Yes.”

“Good. I’ll make all the people who made Kwang Hun a bad person angrier than you are right now, so just wait. And I’m sure you’ll have to make a lot of money to pay me back?”

“Yes.”

“So do well on this program. Then you’ll be able to make enough to pay back the credit easily. What I mean is that you can’t cause accidents. Understand?”

Jun Hyuk understood well enough but did not think that it would be as easy to do.



The next morning, Jun Hyuk did not get up from his bed until the staff came into his room.

“Hey, Jang Jun Hyuk! What are you doing? All the other kids are waiting on the bus.”

“I’m going to rest today. I’m not in the mood to go out.”

“What? We were too lax with this kid... Are you here to play? You think you get to rest because you feel like it?”

Jun Hyuk sat up abruptly,

“Shi... Then? What are you going to do? Are you going to kick me out? Fuck... I’ll leave if you want me to. Happy?”

Jun Hyuk laid back in his bed again.

Unlike the rumors about him, Jun Hyuk had obediently followed the schedule. They had worried that he might resist, but they never thought that he would act so rudely.

The staff had been able to put up with teenagers like this cursing for the past 10 years because their seniors had built up with their tolerance with harsher words.

Also, they were positive that something that happened because he changed overnight as if he were a different person. Their first thought was that they needed to check the cameras installed in the dorm and ask the other kids what had happened last night.

The staff slammed the door closed and went back to the bus where the other kids were waiting.

Chapter 56

“Really? You’re saying a lawyer met Jun Hyuk last night, right? Leave him alone today. Just say he’s sick.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik had an ominous thought once he hung u

“I’ll play the rock version first.”

As Jun Hyuk sat in front of the drums in the recording booth, the producer and composers working with Jo Hyung Joong rubbed their sleepy eyes and started watching.

Jun Hyuk’s music had already aired throughout parts of ‘Tomorrow’s Star’. They had been surprised at the 10 seconds shown of Jun Hyuk on the drums, but this was the kid that Jo Hyung Joong had raved about. Everyone wanted to see how impressive he was.

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“Leave him. He’ll be able to play one song on beat.”

Jo Hyung Joong signaled to Jun Hyuk,

“Okay, you can start since everything is ready.”

Jun Hyuk started to swing the drumsticks with force. Everyone focused on the performance, but it was not the drum they had expected. It was a plain drum, maintaining a very simple beat.

The only thing unusual about it was that this simple drumming went on for 8 minutes.

When Jun Hyuk finished his performance and came out of the booth, the sound engineer and Jo Hyung Joong had puzzled expressions.

“Was it too monotonous?”

“Huh? Uh... No. It was really breezy. It’s good. But Jun Hyuk, 8 minutes is too long. It’s a song to perform. No matter how famous the song is, there isn’t an audience willing to hear 8 minutes of it.”

“It’s 12 minutes.”

“What?”

“The whole thing is 12 minutes. In the middle, there are going to be two points without the drums and just the bass and guitar... I held those places in the middle of the drum.”

They had not even realized that he held spots in the performance because he kept repeating the same simple rhythm. But 12 minutes?

“Hm, it’s too long anyway.”

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Jun Hyuk went back into the booth and spoke,

“The bass goes first... the guitar is second, first, I’ll play them like this twice.”

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The last performance started. The performance beginning in glissando (holding strings down with left string while transferring a sound as if sliding) excited everyone watching.

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“Jo Hyung Joong spoke after seeing the recording studio staff who could not stop admiring Jun Hyuk’s performance,

“You heard that as a perfect performance without any mistakes?

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“Are you talking about Kim Kwang Suk who passed away?”

“Yeah. That was when he performed in Daehak-ro everyday. He was recording his new song holding an acoustic guitar and his voice was cracking. We still couldn’t stop the recording. Even that cracking voice made us ecstatic. Music is like that. If it’s full of atmosphere and that atmosphere comes out, it’s enough.”

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When Jun Hyuk came out of the booth after completing all of the pieces, Jo Hyung Joong applauded him sincerely. He had been a musician for over 20 years. Though he heard the drum, bass, and guitar parts separately, he already heard them as a complete song in his head.

“When did you start learning to play instruments? It’s as if you were born holding a guitar pick.”

“It’s been about 2 years. There’s a practice room in the basement of the cafe I work at.”

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“Hm... Then will you arrange it again?”

“Me? Ha ha ha,”

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“Why are you doing two?”

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“Together? You’re going to play two at the same time?”

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Stanley Jordan.

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Like Stanley Jordan, Jun Hyuk put one guitar around his shoulders and one on the stand.

The same melody of 8 bars flowed from the two guitars. This was Canon itself. Canon was a chorus where the first part was sung followed by the chorus while leaving a certain measure in between. Jun Hyuk imitated the leading melody while playing in a format with successive chords in a temporal flow.

Jun Hyuk’s two hands moved elegantly over the two guitars as though there were two people performing.

After hearing both versions of Canon, Jo Hyung Joong’s instinct as a producer tingled. He did not know how long Jun Hyuk would survive on the program, but he wanted to put Jun Hyuk’s songs together to make an album.

He had already created four songs. Finkl’s song NOW in jazz on the piano, the two versions of Canon, and Shin Hae Chul’s From the Sun to the Boy.

There was no reason to gather only the songs from the broadcast. This was a child who had the talent to continue creating music.

Jo Hyung Joong’s phone rang as he was excited with this expectation,

“Yeah, Producer Kim. Why are you calling?”

– Hi. I just wanted to see if the work was going well.

“Yeah, there’s no problem. Don’t worry about it.”

– Is Jun Hyuk working on the mission song?

“Yeah, there’s a lot to think about because all three songs are good.”

– Excuse me? What do you mean there are three songs?

He had called to check on Jun Hyuk's state, but heard something unexpected.

"Jun Hyuk arranged a classic and it's no joke. I'm wondering which will be better too."

– You know... we can't change that.

"It's okay. It's a classic without copyrights."

– Copyrights aren't the problem. There's another problem involved.....

"Geez. He's doing so well on his own. Is it a problem with the contract again?"

Jo Hyung Joong spoke with a voice full of irritation. It was obvious that the variety show entertainment production executives and the main producer had agreed to share the profits with the agency holding the copyrights.

– Don't say anything to me. I'm just a wage earner. I have to do what the people higher up say.

"Fine. We'll do the appointed song, but you have to listen to a favor me."

– Sure. Tell me what it is.

"Arrange for an orchestra. We don't need a lot, just 16 people. You can't do students though. You have to get people beyond that."

– Why an orchestra all of a sudden? Can't you work on the MIDI operations?

"Jun Hyuk's piano is really good and the orchestral accompaniment came out nicely. It's a waste to do as a MIDI operation."

– Alright. We have to do that much for you. Also... is Jun Hyuk doing well?

"Yeah. I was careful with him for no reason because you said stuff about him being rogue. He's a good kid and just does music. Why? Did something happen?"

– No, it's nothing. I was just wondering.

It seemed everything was still okay. Producer Kim Ki Sik kept praying that they would pass over this without any problems.

Jun Hyung Joong painstakingly polished the three songs to the point where he would have no problem releasing an album with Jun Hyuk right away. For a week, Jun Hyuk forgot everything and concentrated on creating the best music.

p the call from the staff on site at the dorm,

‘A lawyer.....’

Jun Hyuk met a lawyer and would not get out of bed. He was positive the cafe owner had hired a lawyer and Jun Hyuk had heard about what was going on outside. He rushed to the dorm in Ilsan without delay.

When he opened the front door of the dorm, he saw Jun Hyuk laying around the sofa reading a music score. There were cup ramens and canned drinks around the sofa along with the empty dishes and crushed cans that he had already gone through.

“Are you okay? I heard you’re sick.”

“What? No. I said that I wasn’t in the mood.”

Jun Hyuk seemed relaxed in comparison to the staff who had been as frantic as if a wooden house had caught on fire.

“Alright. Do you feel better?”

“I feel better now that I’ve fixed my score and changed it a bit.”

Could he be okay after finding out that someone like a parent had fallen into trouble? Producer Kim Ki Sik spoke cautiously,

“Jun Hyuk. Yesterday, was there...”

“Producer. Can you drop me off at Teacher Jo Hyung Joong’s studio right now?”

“What? To Jo Hyung Joong?”

“Yes. I need to show him the arrangement of the orchestra part I finished for the

mission song.”

“O... Okay. But I don’t know if he’ll be at the studio this early in the morning.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik felt intuitively that he was avoiding it. He was deliberately avoiding what happened yesterday and this morning. He did not want to say what had happened.

He is not the type to go past something as if nothing had happened. Could it be that he had ulterior motives? Or had he resigned because he knew that he did not have the power to do anything?

Producer Kim Ki Sik thought that he did not need to prod Jun Hyuk who did not want to talk about it. There was no need to bother Jun Hyuk yet. They could just monitor his state for a little longer and make him quit the program if they detected anything strange. Fortunately, there was still a lot of time left before the live broadcast.

“He said that he would be at the studio for the time being because of the arrangements.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik who was lost in his thoughts took Jun Hyuk to Jo Hyung Joong’s studio.



Jo Hyung Joong who had fallen asleep at dawn on the studio sofa looked for coffee before he could even open his eyes properly when Jun Hyuk barged in first thing in the morning, waking him up.

While Jo Hyung Joong gulped down his coffee, Jun Hyuk handed him a bundle of scores as thick as a textbook.

“You didn’t go to this morning’s schedule? Don’t you need to go to fitness?”

“I played hooky today because this is more important.”

“But why are there so many scores? I told you to configure it for 16 instruments.”

“This is 16. I brought the Symphony No. 1 I told you about too.”

“Oh right. Symphony No. 1.”

Jo Hyung Joong started to look over the score for ‘From the Sun to the Boy’ slowly. After looking at the score for over 10 minutes, he sighed in admiration,

“Whew- I’ll have to tell them to give you the fees for the arrangement.”

“Excuse me?”

“There’s nothing to change here, so you have to get the arrangement fees and I’ll just get the recording fees.”

“Do you like it?”

“Hm... I had been thinking of an elaborate orchestral accompaniment, but you made it very refreshing. It’s an arrangement that clearly indicates that the piano is the main. But.....”

Jun Hyuk fixed his gaze on Jo Hyung Joong who hesitated to speak while waiting to hear what was lacking in his music.

“This song will bring admiration when listening to it on a CD, but the first release is on a stage to the audience and through the TV. I’m worried it’ll lack impact. The orchestral accompaniment will go out as the MR and there’s just a piano on the stage. It’s especially hard to deliver the rich music scene on the TV. That’s why the performance becomes an important element.”

“You’re saying the performance is important, right?”

“Right. But Jun Hyuk, have you decided on this song? What happened to Pachelbel’s Canon?”

“I don’t need to do it. From now on, I’m not going to do the music I want to do, but what other people like.”

Jun Hyuk who had said just yesterday that he wanted to do Canon was saying now that he wanted to play music for others. Why? What had happened to make him change overnight? He had a firm perspective on music unlike other kids these days.

Jo Hung Joong was surprised by the change in Jun Hyuk and wanted to know what the

reason was, but did not want to show his curiosity. There was no need to rush when he would find out anyway. Jun Hyuk was someone who could not help but communicate through music.

“Hm... This won’t do. I’m getting greedy.”

“Excuse me?”

“I want to listen to everything. Pachelbel’s Canon, both versions. The recorders will be here in a bit so let’s try recording right away.”

“No, teacher. We can do that next time...”

“Didn’t you say it? You’re going to do music that other people want to hear? Let’s hear it. I’ll pick the music that will make you shine most on stage. I’m a person who knows exactly what the public’s preference is. Leave it to me since whatever I choose will be jackpot.”

Jo Hyung Joong winked as he laughed and ran into the shower to regain his consciousness.

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Jo Hyung Joong spoke with a voice full of irritation. It was obvious that the variety show entertainment production executives and the main producer had agreed to share the profits with the agency holding the copyrights.

– Don’t say anything to me. I’m just a wage earner. I have to do what the people higher up say.

“Fine. We’ll do the appointed song, but you have to listen to a favor me.”

– Sure. Tell me what it is.

“Arrange for an orchestra. We don’t need a lot, just 16 people. You can’t do students though. You have to get people beyond that.”

– Why an orchestra all of a sudden? Can’t you work on the MIDI operations?

“Jun Hyuk’s piano is really good and the orchestral accompaniment came out nicely. It’s a waste to do as a MIDI operation.”

– Alright. We have to do that much for you. Also... is Jun Hyuk doing well?

“Yeah. I was careful with him for no reason because you said stuff about him being rogue. He’s a good kid and just does music. Why? Did something happen?”

– No, it’s nothing. I was just wondering.

It seemed everything was still okay. Producer Kim Ki Sik kept praying that they would pass over this without any problems.

Jun Hyung Joong painstakingly polished the three songs to the point where he would

have no problem releasing an album with Jun Hyuk right away. For a week, Jun Hyuk forgot everything and concentrated on creating the best music.

Chapter 58

“Senior, these lawyers are saying that they would like to meet with you.”

“Lawyers? What are you talking about?”

“A couple of them came.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik was annoyed that the legal team was bothering him with legal matters when he had spent two sleepless days sitting on the cutting room sofa.

The company written on the business card the lawyer handed over was Peace Law Firm. Lawyer Baek Seung Ho. Producer Kim Ki Sik felt that something was going wrong.

When looking at the number of lawyers and fees of Korea’s countless law firms, it was a giant firm ranked in 1st or 2nd place. And each business card being handed over said lawyer.

What could be happening that three of them came looking for him while flaunting their prestige?

“Why are lawyers of such a big law firm looking for the producer of an entertainment program?”

“We’re just here about some issues regarding Yoon Kwang Hun. Excuse our intrusion.”

“Yoon Kwang Hun? Oh, the owner of the cafe where Jun Hyuk worked?”

“Yes. I am his attorney.”

An owner of a small cafe in Misari appointed a lawyer from Korea’s best law firm as his attorney? Producer Kim became even more confused,

“If you’re here to talk about the articles going around the internet, you’ve come to the wrong place. If you want to file a lawsuit, you have to go to the press offices.”

“Ha ha. It’s not that bad. Aren’t I a lawyer?”

“Then why?”

“We have a couple things to ask.”

“Let’s end this quickly since I’m busy.”

“Oh, sure. When you sent out the press release, did you release information about Jun Hyuk as well? That he didn’t get any wages for the past 2 years, that Yoon Kwang Hun acquired guardianship of him after he appeared on the program and right before they signed the contract... Information like that.”

He was positive these lawyers had come to the broadcasting station to look for the people who spread the rumors first. He broke out in a cold sweat,

“I’m not sure. You have to confirm that with the public relations team. The production team doesn’t deal with that kind of stuff.”

“Really? I just met with the manager of the public relations team and he said that there was a request not to release any information on Jun Hyuk. We came here knowing it’s a pardon because we wanted to see if there was a special reason for this.”

“Oh, we did request that. We did not want to create news with such provocative articles.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik wanted to run away to the legal team immediately, but he could not show the slightest sign of this. The lawyer’s eyes were watching him and taking note of his complexion like a wild beast seeking its prey.

Lawyer Baek Seung Ho already knew that the sweat building on Producer Kim Ki Sik’s forehead was not because of the heat.

The person whose secret has been revealed has already lost the fight. Baek Seung Ho spoke with more vigor than Jun Hyuk swung his drumsticks in order to wave his flag of victory,

“I see. Then one more thing. Is it true that only this broadcasting station knew about the ‘facts’ regarding Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk’s relationship? Jun Hyuk did a lot of interviews about his past. However, many articles came up just two or three hours

after the program aired. There was even information that they could never know just by watching the broadcast. What do you think happened?”

“You’ll have to ask the press offices. How would I know?”

His anger was proof that he was frustrated. Baek Seung Ho was certain that this main producer may not be the culprit of the media show, but was an accomplice at the least.

“Pardon the inconvenience. We just asked to check. So the broadcasting station never leaked information to the press office. We will keep this in mind.”

“Excuse me. Did the cafe owner appoint you as his lawyer?”

He was checking a question he did not need to ask. He must not want to believe that Yoon Kwang Hun had a relationship with such an influential law firm like Peace.

“Yes. He’s like an older brother to me, so I said that I would take this case first. And as you can see, our law firm is treating this as a very important case.”

Baek Seung Ho was highlighting that the three lawyers were working together.

“We cannot condone the spreading of such vicious false rumors. We intend to give legal penalties even to people who leave malicious comments online.”

He made his point concrete to Producer Kim Ki Sik who was already at a loss for words.

“Oh right. We forgot the most important aspect.”

Baek Seung Ho pulled a thin manila folder out of his bag and handed it over,

“This is a warrant. I’m Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk’s counsel. Going forward, Peace Law Firm will review everything related to their contracts.”

As Producer Kim Ki Sik accepted the documents, Baek Seung Ho gave him a friendly smile. He was certain that he could make the last, decisive move,

“And there’s something we would like to propose.”

“Propose?”

“Yes. We would like to modify the contract between Jang Jung Hyuk and MV channel.”

“Modify the contract? What nonsense! Both sides have already signed.”

Was it not already a much more generous contract compared to the other contestants’?

To modify that? It could not be done.

“Oy, Producer. Isn’t that why I’m proposing that we change it? Don’t be so antagonistic.”

“Fine. Let’s hear it.”

“As you know, hasn’t Jun Hyuk been the hottest issue for the past 3 weeks? The viewer ratings for ‘Tomorrow’s Star’ has increased greatly because of that.”

“So?”

“If you look at the contract, the revenue was structured so 40% went to the publisher, 40% to the track producer, and the remaining 20% was split between the composer, lyricist, arranger, performer, and singer. But doesn’t this structure make it so that MV channel takes 80% as the publisher and producer?”

“We’re not the only ones who do that. That’s the standard in Korea’s music industry.”

“Yes, I understand. Since publishers are created on idol standards these days, it costs a lot to produce music. To train idols, you need to buy the song, call in the session men to play the music, and find a producer... It’s expensive.”

“A lawyer knows a lot about such things.”

“I did a bit of research. Ha ha. Anyway, I heard that Jun Hyuk writes his own songs, performs, and produces his own accompaniments. He’s doing everything on his own. If we calculate the production costs, isn’t it just the recording fee?”

“Is that right? Are you asking to receive the producing profits?”

“You catch on quickly. We need to receive 15% of the production 40%. We were going to demand half but...”

“This man! Are you crazy? Let’s end this if you’re going to keep talking nonsense.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik stood up from his seat while huffing in anger. This is a proposal that would be hard to accept even if it were for a legend like Jo Yong Pil. No matter how much traction Jun Hyuk brought in viewer ratings, how dare they try to claim the production profits.

“Then we will admit Jun Hyuk to the hospital tomorrow. He will need to stay for one or two months of course.”

Baek Seung Ho’s low but clear voice stuck in Producer Kim Ki Sik’s ears.

“What?”

“Don’t you think so? The man who might as well be his biological parent has been beaten up for the past three weeks as Korea’s greatest villain. Don’t you think his shock would be unimaginable?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik could not help but sit back in his seat. The hospital. Even if they put the bustling media second, they would need to completely edit Jun Hyuk out of the broadcast airing in three days. The biggest issue was that all of the previews they had aired of Jun Hyuk whenever they had the chance to would all go to waste if he did not appear on the live broadcast stage.

Jun Hyuk had created an overwhelming fan base of women in their teens and 20s because of his good looks. Furthermore, his dramatic 17 year life built a compassion that gathered even people in their 40s to the TV.

With such high expectations for Jun Hyuk, half of these viewers would disappear if he were to exit the competition.

“Are you threatening me?”

“Do you hear it as a threat? If you listen to the rest of my words, you will come to understand that it’s a proposal.”

Baek Seung Ho knew well that the proposal would not stick with just a threat. In order to get something, something needed to give.

“Very well. Let’s hear the rest; see how far you take this.”

“Star Week recording goes out again in three days, right? We will hold a press

conference that day. It'll be a joint press conference for Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun. It's going to end very warmly. Then the media will be abuzz... and that'll affect viewer ratings directly."

Baek Seung Ho took out a presentation and passed them over,

"Take a look. We have organized the interview contents. You'll know by reading through it, but the questions are killer. I guarantee viewer ratings will surpass 10% no matter what."

With Producer Kim Ki Sik who skimmed over the documents in front of him, Baek Seung Ho went over more of the proposal,

"And every week on the day of the broadcast, we at Peace are going to release our work one by one. The lawsuit against the press office, lawsuit against the malicious commenters, et cetera. We'll make it first place in real-time searches every week. It won't be a damaging agreement to the broadcasting station in any way."

"What if we say no?"

"Didn't I tell you? Jun Hyuk will be admitted to the hospital. It's an end to his activities. Then track revenues will disappear entirely. All you'll have are one or two songs from Star Week."

"The contract says that he can't refuse appearing on the broadcast until he's eliminated..."

"How can a child who passed out from mental shock appear on broadcast? This is a force majeure. There isn't a single judge in Korea who will send a child hospitalized after fainting to a stage."

The actress who lays in a hospital bed to avoid a breach of contract. It was a common scenario. It was common because this method worked.

"And if you refuse my proposal, we won't start this lawsuit that the media will be so interested in until after 'Tomorrow's Star' is over. Our Peace Law Firm has no intention of helping you with your viewer ratings."

This meant he was going to make everyone forget about Jun Hyuk during the broadcasting period.

“I’m sure you’re busy, so we’ll get up now. Think about it and give us a call by tomorrow morning. If you don’t call us by tomorrow morning, Jun Hyuk will be admitted to the hospital. Then, good day to you.”

Baek Seung Ho left the conference room without looking back. When the lawyers left, Producer Kim Ki Sik felt numb as if a typhoon had just passed. How could this happen?

Chapter 59

Inside the broadcast station elevator, a lawyer who had followed Baek Seung Ho finally began to speak,

“Wow, senior. That was really impressive. How did you think to propose such a deal? I couldn’t even imagine that.”

“I didn’t think of it.”

“What? Then who?”

“It’s Yoon Kwang Hun’s idea.”

“Yoon Kwang Hun? The cafe owner?”

“Yeah. That man was a fearsome beast in the past. He’s living quietly because he’s a wolf without teeth now. He can easily ruin a producer of a broadcast station.”

The junior lawyer had a difficult time conceptualizing the cafe owner he had seen once as a fearsome beast. He could not imagine that from that quiet man who had only smiled cheerfully.

“I was only going to confirm the facts with the broadcast station. I was just going to end it after seeing if they spread the subject matter for the tabloids. The broadcast station isn’t our target. We need to ruin the press offices and the people making malicious comments since the objects of the lawsuit are these two. The broadcast station doesn’t have a link to Yoon Kwang Hun.”

“That’s right. I thought it was strange as well. Even if they did spread the rumors, it’s obvious that they’ll pretend they didn’t.”

“We still need to check. What did you think? That producer seemed to be surprised, right?”

“Yes. I’m certain he has a relationship with that agency you talked about.”

“Yeah, but there’s nothing we can do. There’s no evidence and he’s not a direct party. If we shake the press office, they’re bound to fight each other. If the agency paid them off, you think they’ll stay still? As they do that, I’m sure something more will come out. I was going to wait, but Yoon Kwang Hun said that we need to wield the knife while we had it by the hilt. Later later. It’s stupid to rely on later when we don’t know how it’ll end up.”

Baek Seung Ho recalled Yoon Kwang Hun’s past when he was like a fearsome beast. He had been the person able to crush a perfectly good company without hesitation in order to guarantee success in future investments.

He used to be a cruel beast who would laugh and say that it was the law of nature for a wolf to eat a lamb.

Life was really unpredictable when seeing a man like now running a cafe while taking care of a talented boy.



Producer Kim Ki Sik sat in the conference room alone for a while and then ran to the legal team.

“Ah, Producer Kim. Good that you came. I was going to request a meeting with you.”

“Peace?”

“Huh? How did you know? Did they go to you too?”

“Yes. They said they wanted to check a few things.....”

“Jun Hyuk must really be a gem. He’s only been on air once or twice, but magnate company like this starts managing him. It’s a good thing they appeared after our contract with him was already completed. If not, we wouldn’t have been able to contract him. They would have made a huge deal that it’s an unfair contract.”

The legal team looked as though they were relieved that Peace had come later without realizing that Producer Kim Ki Sik was burning up inside.

“That’s not why those people came.”

“Ah, there’s something else, but it doesn’t matter for us. It’s an issue with the media. But... is that true?”

The rumors that provoked the internet. Age and position had nothing to do with wanting to know the truth behind these gossip articles. The middle aged chief of the legal team had eyes full of curiosity.

“The articles in the media? No. Jun Hyuk and the cafe owner don’t have that kind of relationship.”

“Really? Then the press offices are dead. He he.”

The chief of the legal team laughed sinisterly as though he already knew what was going to happen.

“What? Why?”

“You didn’t see the warrant?”

“I saw it. That’s not something special, is it?”

“Look at the date it was delegated.”

“What about it?”

“The cafe owner signed the warrant the day the first article went out. But it’s been three weeks and Peace hasn’t done anything. Why do you think they would do that?”

“.....?”

“What if Jun Hyuk and the cafe owner had held a press conference as soon as the first articles went out? If Jun Hyuk had cried while saying ‘Yoon Kwang Hun is like a father to me,’ wouldn’t it have been heartwarming?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik had a vague idea of why the time the warrant had been delegated was important.

“Didn’t they announce gender equality last week? After checking, Yoon Kwang Hun’s attorney said that he would review everything. The internet became quiet after the gender equality announcement too. That situation was resolved with this. Peace has

been waiting until now. They've been gathering the materials for their counterpunch."

The chief's explanation was no longer necessary. Producer Kim Ki Sik knew enough about Peace's strategy.

"How many articles are there on the internet? Didn't the press offices go overboard and write more when the cafe owner disappeared? Tsk tsk, they wrote articles as undoubtable facts instead of leaving room for suspicion. All of the comments were covered in swearing. Peace has been waiting for that. Now the press office and the people who left comments are all dead."

"It's that bad? But it's a press office....."

"I guess you wouldn't know. Once, there was a scandal about an actress and people commented all sorts of bad things like that she was dirty and a tramp. That actress hired Peace to sue those commenters."

The chief stuck out his tongue while thinking of how severe the people at Peace are,

"They went through criminal proceedings for malicious libel and got fines for \$200. And going on to civil rights, they claimed damage fines of \$2,000 per person. That's hundreds of people, hundreds. Peace made sure they received every last bit of that."

"Geez."

"When that actress hired Peace, she had agreed to give them all of the compensation as their fees since it doesn't look good for a successful actress to take money from random people."

"Then?"

One question had been answered. Now he knew how a cafe owner had been able to hire Peace.

"Producer Kim, you have no sense. What money does a cafe owner have to hire Peace as his attorney? I bet Peace will take more than 80% of the compensation they receive. This is a lawsuit resulting in at least \$10 million."

The cold sweat he showed in front of lawyer Baek Seung Ho was nothing. The events to come were not going to end with the internet press office. The wounded press office

might charge Dine Music for the money. This link needed to end at Dine Music.

The chief of the legal team had a hunch that something was wrong when he saw Producer Kim Ki Sik's cold sweat,

"But why are you like that? Is there a problem?"

"Oh, no."

"What is it? We're not involved, are we? Hurry up and tell me before the problem gets bigger."

"The truth is... It seems that someone on our end was drinking with a person at some agency and talked about the two people's relationship. And that was spilled to the press office through that agency."

"Whew... That's fine. I was surprised. I knew the articles had gone up too quickly."

"It'll be okay, right?"

"It's fine. It's just something he said drunk. If you're looking at it legally, the problem is the person who wrote the article. Is everything you say while you're drinking the truth? That's just a personal thought or guess. The person who wrote it without checking the facts is at fault. There's no power in the spoken word. It needs to be printed, photographed, or recorded. It needs to be detailed. Don't worry."

"Ah, okay. Thank you."

They could slip out of it and they could end the connection. Producer Kim Ki Sik thought that he needed to hurry up and tell the director of the entertainment station this and cut their ties to Dine Music.

Chapter 60

Producer Kim Ki Sik who came out of the Director's office seemed to be at peace. The Director was not someone who had reached his position on a gamble. Their contract with Dine Music did not even mention Jang Jun Hyuk's name. There was no connection in the first place because it says that among the finalists of 'Tomorrow's Star,' it indicated as 'the person who signs with Dine Music.'

The Director was also in agreement that it would not be damaging to share some of the profits that Jun Hyuk brought in because he brought in a lot of profits oriented to the viewer ratings. On top of that, it was not a song but an accompaniment. Jun Hyuk was needed more for the viewer ratings than track sales.

The Director fully understood that the attorney was right in saying that if Jun Hyuk were to disappear to the hospital, they would lose both the viewer ratings and the profits. The answer was simple if they calculated it a few times.

Instead, the Director did not forget to tell him to negotiate until the end. His order was to lower the 15% producer revenue that the attorney had requested to 10%.

The attorney was not stupid. He would have demanded 15% knowing that they would try to lower it, so he would be willing to accept 10%.



Jun Hyuk finished recording all three songs over the last week. He had only left the orchestral accompaniment for the piano version of From the Sun to the Boy to perfect it more.

Jun Hyuk rejected the usual recording system. He wanted to record the violin, viola, cello, oboe, et cetera all together instead of recording each separately.

He thought that the sound of the different instruments having a conversation while pulling each other along could not come out if recorded as separate tracks.

However, they needed to push the recording for the orchestra for two days. The

broadcasting station needed Jun Hyuk for something more important, so they had emptied his schedule for two days to send him outside.

“Boss.”

“What’s this? How many times have you been on air and you still look like this? You don’t look like a celebrity at all. Ha ha.”

“What? I thought you would have been suffering, but you’ve put on weight.”

Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun wanted to hug each other, but they were Korean men who found such sappy things awkward. All they did was hold hands as they faced each other.

A lot of reporters were already waiting at the press conference that Peace Law Firm had prepared. As they were in the waiting room on one side of the conference room, it felt as though the two had not seen each other in months, not 20 days.

“I just rested. I didn’t even look at the internet. I spent my days eating, sleeping, and listening to music, so I just gained weight.”

“I guess I was the only one worrying.”

“That’s why I told you not to think about it and just focus on your music. Did you make your mission song?”

“Yes. The sound is unbelievable when you’re working with experts with good recording studio equipment. I really like it.”

“Then that’s enough. This is all over after today. Focus on your music more starting tomorrow.”

“What’s over? It’s all over if the press conference goes well.”

Baek Seung Ho who had been watching their reunion silently looked at them with blazing eyes,

“Jun Hyuk, listen well. You can’t curse at the reporters or get mad at them during the press conference. If you do, the press offices won’t write about the truth, but about your swearing and temper. Then everything we endured until now will go to waste.

Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"What did I say the best revenge against adults is?"

"Money."

"That's right. We'll ruin them with their money... So be aware."

"Okay, don't worry about it. I won't lose my temper."

Yoon Kwang Hun's eyes widened as he listened to their conversation,

"Seung Ho, you... What are you saying to Jun Hyuk? What is this about money? You're talking nonsense to a kid."

"You stay put. Is Jun Hyuk a child? I heard he got \$20,000 for his modeling fees. And I'm sure he'll be making some money from the music he released on the last broadcast. Jun Hyuk isn't a child anymore. Don't treat him like a child when he's out in society making money on his own, and a lot of it, and a lot more of it than most adults at that."

Yoon Kwang Hun stopped speaking when he saw Baek Seung Ho's somberness. He was right. Jun Hyuk was now on his own, working with experts. As he thought that, Jun Hyuk seemed to have grown a lot.

"Okay, let's go out. Let's hurry up and get this finished so we can go and drink."

The three men went out into the press conference.



"I am Lawyer Baek Seung Ho of Peace Law Firm. First, I'd like to thank everyone who came here to report the truth."

As Baek Seung Ho politely greeted the reporters, the cameras started flashing.

"Please direct your attention to this video."

The conference room light turned off and a screen covering one wall lit up. Lawyer

Baek Seung Ho had prepared for the press conference as though it were an investment presentation.

A middle-aged man came up on the screen,

“Hello, I am pianist Go Sae Won. I studied the piano in France and Italy, and I am a lecturer at a university as well.”

Go Sae Won spoke for a while about when Yoon Kwang Hun came looking for him with a young genius a year ago and gave him lessons. He explained how Yoon Kwang Hun strived to help Jun Hyuk excel at the piano.

When the video was over, dozens of e-mail messages in English showed up on the screen.

“These messages are already in the documents. Professor Go Sae Won has been communicating with schools in Europe and Yoon Kwang Hun in America for admissions since before Jun Hyuk entered the audition program. Any school would be happy to accept a talented person like Jun Hyuk, so Professor Go Sae Won and Yoon Kwang Hun have been going through them carefully.”

Baek Seung Ho paused to see the reporters’ reactions and spoke again,

“The reports that Yoon Kwang Hun intended to create an agency to leech off of him are unfounded. He just wanted to give Jun Hyuk a good memory to leave Korea with from the audition program.”

As the reporters began to murmur, a picture of Jun Hyuk’s practice room came on the screen.

“This is a picture of the practice room that Yoon Kwang Hun created for Jun Hyuk in the basement of his cafe. Jun Hyuk made as much music as he wanted and worked on training his instrument skills here.”

Another picture came up on the screen of the instruments and equipment.

“These are the instruments and equipment that Yoon Kwang Hun set up for Jun Hyuk. All of the specs are detailed here as well. To put it simply, the only people who have equipment like this are top-class bands. To get all of this, Yoon Kwang Hun had to get a mortgage loan on his apartment and has invested over \$100,000.”

The reporters started to murmur more when they heard about the \$100,000 and mortgage loan.

“Jun Hyuk worked at the cafe because of his kind thinking that he would like to help Yoon Kwang Hun in any way he could. The only work Jun Hyuk did was to clean the cafe before it opened and once it was closed. He never even washed the dishes. He spent the rest of his time focusing on his music.”

A few reporters who had caught on quickly sent text messages to their offices. They were telling the offices that they need to block any articles that spoke negatively about Yoon Kwang Hun.

“The results are in Jun Hyuk’s music shown on the audition program. Within 2 years, Jun Hyuk is showing skills in playing instruments, composition, and arrangement that even experts recognize.”

Baek Seung Ho got a glimpse of Yoon Kwang Hun and spoke again,

“Oh right, Korean and English. Yoon Kwang Hun taught him himself along with how to read and write music scores.”

The reporters typed faster and the cameras did not stop flashing.

“I would like to ask how many parents there are in Korea who are willing to invest over \$100,000 in their children while going in debt.”

When Baek Seung Ho gave the sign, the lights of the conference room flickered on and it became bright again.

“He took in a child who isn’t related to him in anyway off the street and helped him become an impressive musician. Doesn’t it fall short to reward him? Everyone has been accusing such a man of being a villainous thief.”

The sound of the reporters typing stopped. Baek Seung Ho stopped talking and kept the silence. He was giving them time to think of how serious the rumors they had spread were.

“Now, any reporter who thinks they have the right to ask these two people questions can ask now.”

None of the reporters tried to ask questions. The silence continued before someone finally spoke,

“I would like to ask Jun Hyuk, how do you feel right now?”

It was a cable reporter who had not made a big issue out of the news because it was a cable broadcasting station. Jun Hyuk took the mic and took a deep breath to calm his anger,

“How do you think I feel?”

The reporter was surprised by Jun Hyuk’s unexpected response, but did not show it.

“Jun Hyuk. Please tell us how you feel instead of asking us.”

“How would you feel if your parents were getting cursed out by the world? Does it make sense to ask that question?”

“Jun Hyuk, calm down. This isn’t a place for us to let out our anger.”

Yoon Kwang Hun held Jun Hyuk’s hand, nervous that he would jump out of his seat in anger.

“This is a question for Yoon Kwang Hun. Why did you disappear instead of explaining the situation?”

The reporter had continued questioning. Yoon Kwang Hun who had been trying to calm Jun Hyuk down became angry as well,

“Why did you people write articles without checking the truth? I saw that articles came up within 2 hours after the first broadcast with Jun Hyuk aired. It was late at night. What was so urgent? Explain? Isn’t it right for you to explain why you put out articles without checking the facts in the first place?”

Yoon Kwang Hun felt Jun Hyuk’s he was holding tighten.

“I think you’re the one who needs to calm down.”

Jun Hyuk smiled brightly at Yoon Kwang Hun. The reporters who saw this could not ask questions any longer. Their smiles answered everything. The broadcast station’s

camera zoomed in on their faces. This was the best scene from today's press conference.

Just then, the question that all of the reporters wanted to ask came up,

“Are you preparing for a lawsuit with the last article?”

Baek Seung Ho took the mic as if he had been waiting for the question,

“We have not made the decision yet. Peace will decide after consulting with them both. We will end the press conference here. Thank you.”

The three men left the flashing behind them and came out of the conference room.

Chapter 61

Yoon Kwang Hun and Baek Seung Ho talked about the days when they were close as they drank in a hotel room.

“Is that true? Our boss was that successful?”

Jun Hyuk was repeating the same question in disbelief as he ate the food they had ordered as room service.

“Yeah. Kwang Hun was the king of Yeouido. Everyone knew who he was.”

“Hey kid. You didn’t believe me all this time? Wow... I feel betrayed.....”

“Well... who would believe it? It doesn’t make sense that someone who used to move hundreds of thousands of dollars and made over a million is running a cafe that doesn’t even do very well.”

‘Back in the day.....’ Of the adults who said that they had been really great back in the day, he had never seen someone who really had been. Jun Hyuk had not believed anything Yoon Kwang Hun had said.

“But sir, were you really going to send me abroad?”

Jun Hyuk had heard that Yoon Kwang Hun and Professor Go Sae Won were looking into famous schools abroad where he could study for the first time at the press conference. He was grateful, but a little sad.

“Oh, I didn’t tell you. Nothing is decided yet. We were just looking into it. Why? You don’t want to study abroad?”

“I don’t know. I do want to go, but it’s scary... and I also get the feeling that I just want to lock myself in a recording studio and make music.”

Baek Seung Ho who was drunk at this point, emptied his glass and spoke,

“Oh right. I was curious about that too. What is he going to study when you say he’s

like Mozart? Shouldn't he just go straight to releasing his music with a debut? I thought you said music was just spilling out of his head. What more can he learn?"

"You're so ignorant. You don't think Mozart learned the theories of music? Mozart's father, Leopold Mozart, was a famous piano teacher in Salzburg. Do you know how many books he wrote on music? Mozart was home schooled on music from an impressive teacher from birth."

Yoon Kwang Hun was also drunk,

"Jun Hyuk's lacking theory the most. He needs to know the theories to get the notes of the music spilling out of his head more elaborately so he can make music. No genius can make music without knowing the theories. I'm sure understanding it will be quick."

"That's not it. Isn't a genius someone whose music is naturally made to the theories? What are you going to do if learning the theories messes up Jun Hyuk's talent?"

The two men kept speaking their opinions. To Jun Hyuk, this just looked like a drunk banter.

Adults fought over useless things when they drank too much. He did feel good that there were now two adults who worried about his future.

While their voices grew louder, Jun Hyuk was lost in thought.

Did he need to learn theory? Would the music in his head become more stylish if he learned the theories?

No. Good music, stylish music, what could this be? What was Teacher Jo Hyung Joong's method to making stylish music?

These thoughts kept coming up in Jun Hyuk's mind without rest.

Baek Seung Ho yelled loudly as if trying to interfere with Jun Hyuk's thoughts,

"Stop! Turn on the TV. The broadcast is going to start."

Jun Hyuk bolted up and when he turned on the TV, 'Tomorrow's Star' was about to start. Since it was still about the area preliminaries, Jun Hyuk should not be making

an appearance.

However, to raise viewer ratings, the broadcast started with highlights from Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun's press conference. After that, they showed scenes of Jun Hyuk's area preliminary auditions that had not come out on broadcast before.

They showed the guitar version of Jung Tae Chun's 'Poet's Town' that Jun Hyuk had arranged on the spot along with the surprised faces of the judges. For a broadcast that only aired for 1 hour, it could have been seen as a special on Jun Hyuk because all of the clips regarding him added up to 15 minutes.

"I have to admit the people at the broadcasting station are fast. When do you think they prepared all of this?"

The 10% viewer rating that Baek Seung Ho promised may have been incorrect, but it was definitely twice the rating of last episode.

Baek Seung Ho who had been drunkenly cursing the broadcasting station stood up shakily. When he went home, Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk became quiet.

"Jun Hyuk."

"Yes."

"What are you thinking about?"

"What? No, it's nothing. Just."

"Don't worry too much. You don't have to study abroad if you don't want to."

Yoon Kwang Hun knew that Jun Hyuk had become much more quiet when talk of studying abroad came up.

"It's not that I don't want to. I don't know."

Yoon Kwang Hun pat Jun Hyuk's shoulder gently like a father and teacher,

"Then just do what you want. If you decide later that you want to study, you can do it then. You're only 17. It's not too late even if you decide to study 10 years later."

“The thing is... I don’t know what I want to do right now.”

Yoon Kwang Hun knew better what Jun Hyuk wanted to do now. Make music. He wanted to make the melodies in his head into concrete sound. That was all.

When Jun Hyuk said he did not know, it probably meant that he did not know what he needed to do to prepare for his future.

He had said that making music on the audition program was fun. Is it not definite that he is enjoying himself because he can hear the melodies in his head with his own ears?

“Everyone is like that at your age. The kids who are in high school, studying for college entrance exams are just studying to go to college. They choose their schools and majors according to their exam scores. You’re much better off compared to them. It’s already decided what you’re going to do.”

Jun Hyuk could not believe that he was better off than other kids his age because he had never even attended school.

“Most kids just choose to be a lawyer or doctor to make a lot of money because they’re smart. I was like that too. When I was going to school, economics major was really popular because it was easy to get hired at a large company. That’s why I just decided to do it.”

“What did you really want to do?”

“Honestly, I still don’t know.”

“What? You still don’t know? Geez.”

17 year old Jun Hyuk was having trouble believing that a man over 40 had gone through life without knowing what he wanted to do.

“It’s like that since I didn’t know until college that I would become a stockbroker. When I graduated, I just found employment at a financial firm that would pay me a lot. When I was working, I saw that people with MBAs were paid much more than I was, so I quit and went to study abroad. That’s how it progressed. I just fell into the excitement of making money later. After I lost everything... I started this cafe thinking I’ll just live while listening to music.”

This was something difficult for young Jun Hyuk to understand. There weren't very many people in the world who did what they wanted to do. No, it was rare for people to even know what exactly they wanted to do.

"But I have a dream now."

"A dream?"

"Yeah, you know what it is?"

"What is it? Is it... me?"

"Yeah. I want to make it so that your music doesn't stop as the world makes a full turn. So for the 365 days in a year, your music is playing from somewhere at any time. It doesn't matter if it's classic or pop since there will be someone to listen to it."

Jun Hyuk spent the entire night talking to Yoon Kwang Hun about the future and dreams as such, and went back to the dormitory.

Chapter 62

“Have you modified the contract?”

“Yes. Since Producer Kim agreed to the win-win strategy, we decided to be satisfied with the 10% as well.”

Baek Seung Ho who had come to irritate him early in the morning was smiling.

“You talked big, but we didn’t reach over 10%.”

“Well, I was surprised too. I thought it was a popular audition program, but the average viewer rating only reached 2%. I thought it would be at least 5% and was saying that it would be doubled.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik’s expression toward a Baek Seung Ho who was making fun of the program’s low viewer ratings was not amicable.

“4% is still double your ordinary viewer rating, and it was 6% at the parts with Jun Hyuk. Isn’t this proof that our offer isn’t that bad?”

This information had not been updated on the portal broadcast program yet. Only the broadcasting station knew the viewer ratings. How did Baek Seung Ho know?

“Don’t be too surprised, Producer Kim. The director of Peace pestered the director of MV channel this morning to find out the viewer ratings. The president of MV channel must have had to get up early this morning even though he’s a late sleeper. Didn’t he get into work early today?”

The president? Producer Kim Ki Sik remembered that Peace was the best law firm in the country.

“I guess our director knows the director of Peace well?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik’s voice suddenly became careful.

“Of course. A while ago, your director... Oh right. I can’t tell you this. We need to

maintain confidentiality between the lawyer and client. Basically, our Peace once saved your director who was in a very uncomfortable situation. Since then, the two directors have been very close. Oh, and our director is older.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik thought he was in a cold sweat again. It felt like his life was being shortened by 10 years every time this lawyer showed up.

“So our director must know all about this situation with Jun Hyuk.”

“Of course. He has a lot of interest in it.”

The director is interested in a lawsuit between a press office and Peace? He had the thought that there could be failure where the sparks were.

“Producer Kim, what are you thinking about?”

“Oh, it’s nothing. But why have you come to meet me? Isn’t everything settled if you’ve modified the contract?”

“Oy, do you think I’m here to hang out? I came to give you information.”

“Information?”

“Yes. This week is the start of Star Week broadcasts, right?”

“Yes.”

“You’ll have to increase Jun Hyuk’s air time. On the day of the broadcast, we’re going to put on a big show.”

“A show?”

“Yes. We have four boxes of captures of the false rumors the press spread and the malicious comments people left online that we’ve gathered. We’re going to take all of this and go to the prosecutor to sue them for defamation. Won’t the viewer ratings go up again if it gets noisy?”

“This... Do I have to say thank you for this?”

“I’m not saying this to hear a thank you. I’m just letting you know for when you’re

editing the show. I'll be going then."

Baek Seung Ho who had nodded his goodbye turned around as though he had forgotten something,

"Oh right, do you know Dine Music?"

"Excuse me? Di... Dine Music? Of course I know them. They're a fairly large-scale agency. But why are you suddenly asking about Dine?"

"If what our investigators found out is correct, it seems Dine made the request to the press offices to take Jun Hyuk. We're thinking of submitting this information from our investigation to prosecution as well."

Baek Seung Ho pretended that he did not notice Producer Kim Ki Sik's surprised face and left the office. Since he had thrown the stone, there would be a wave.



Producer Kim Ki Sik sprinted to the Director's office. Once Peace had mentioned Dine Music, they could not wait much longer.

"Director, this could be bad for us if the problem becomes bigger."

"You worry too much, man. You just worry about the viewer ratings. What would you have done if we didn't have Jun Hyuk?"

"Director!"

The director of the entertainment station seemed to be calm even after hearing the overturning news.

"Hey, are you the president of Dine Music? Did you convince Dine Music to try to take Jun Hyuk? Did you spread the content for the articles? Dine did all of that. And... that law firm is just filing a lawsuit against the press office. What's the issue?"

"Don't you think that's why they're being like this? If a rumor spreads that the source of the articles was us....."

“Our name will never come up. No, Dine Music’s name won’t even come up. You don’t know why? Even if it’s a press office releasing tabloids, how can they say that they received money to write articles?”

The internet press office would claim the confidentiality statement and protect the source until the end in the spirit of a reporter. Instead, Dine Music and its artists would suffer the malicious articles that result. Dine Music would have to compensate the press office for everything, whatever that would be.

“Is that Baek Seung Ho a policeman? A prosecutor? You think he’s doing this because he wants to catch the bad guys? That man is a lawyer. Lawyers hate standing in front of a judge in the court most. You know how bothersome a lawsuit is?”

“Then?”

“He’s just throwing us a bone. He’s just letting it slip that they’re going to sue and prosecute Dine Music soon. Then Dine will tell the press office... and if the press office is embarrassed that they wrote articles without checking facts, they’ll try to come to an agreement. If the media outlets that are the subjects of the lawsuit give them enough money, it’ll all be over. Lawyers are asking for money, not justice. Lawyers find justice with money.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik finally realized the situation. All the lawyer had to do was let it slip that they were going to start a lawsuit. But he had also unnecessarily said that he knew the director of their broadcasting station well, so that he would be surprised.

His goal was to make them discuss these issues with Dine Music. Producer Kim felt once again that the director had not gotten to his position on a gamble. He knew the flow of this issue too well. This could not have happened once or twice.

“Let it slip to Dine Music like the lawyer wants. Let them figure out with money amongst themselves. And you just worry about the viewer ratings. When is Jun Hyuk coming out until?”

“He’s coming out three times.”

“Watch the ratings and eliminate him. Keep advancing him if the ratings are good.”

“He’s going to make the first live stage really well. We’re going to watch that and make our decision.”

“Alright, let’s do it right this time. Do you know how much it costs to take care of all three meals in the countryside with these viewer ratings? We spend way too much money and the viewer ratings are only $\frac{1}{3}$. There’s talk saying that we should get rid of this. Let’s work hard.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik was embarrassed that he had made such a big deal for no reason. There was one thing he had gotten out of it though. He had basically gotten permission to do with Jun Hyuk as he pleased.

Chapter 63

In the two days that Jun Hyuk had been away, Kwak Hye Sung and Nam Seung Hee had finished recording their first mission song. Jo Hyung Joong's studio was in the midst of mastering the track for release.

"Jun Hyuk, you're here? You had a rough time?"

"No, I'm okay."

The smile did not disappear from Jo Hyung Joong's face as he welcomed Jun Hyuk.

"Well, things like this happen in life. Let it all go if it's been taken care of."

"Yes."

Jo Hyung Joong spoke with a backpack over his shoulder.

"Sorry to do this as soon as you get here, but let's go out. We need to work from another place."

"Where are we going?"

"To record the 16 instrument orchestra. We don't have a recording booth large enough to fit 16 people."

"There's a booth that fits 16 people?"

"Yeah. There are places abroad that are large enough to fit entire orchestras. The studio we're going to now can fit around 20 people. They usually record movie OSTs there."

Orchestral accompaniments are usually recorded once the MIDI operations are completed and each instrument is recorded separately. One violinist played the 1st and 2nd violin. They did not play together to record, but played separately and combined the tracks.

However, there were times when everyone recorded together in order to express the full emotion. The disadvantage was that as there were more people playing, they needed to keep replaying the piece if anyone made a mistake. Therefore, the cost and time made it common to record by track.

A recording studio in Gangnam had a booth that looked like a compact concert hall as if showing that it was used for recording tracks in movies. The 16 performers were already tuning their instruments in the studio.

“Teacher Jo, let us know whenever there’s something you don’t like. Aren’t we just instruments that are part of this music?”

The senior violinist who was the Concertmaster exchanged greetings with Jo Hyung Joong with humility. Though their fields were different, Jo Hyung Joong was an overwhelming presence as a producer in popular music. Jo Hyung Joong was not someone to underestimate even in the world of classical.

“You’re too kind. Is there anything for me to touch? I’m sure something like this will be easy for you. And this is Jun Hyuk, the pianist and arranger.”

The Concertmaster was surprised when he heard that Jun Hyuk was the arranger and pianist. This was the person who had made news on broadcast and online this week. He assumed that he would be good on the piano, but did not think that he would be able to arrange music.

“Oh, this is him. I thought he would be shy because the MIDI file I received was light... but his image is so different.”

Jun Hyuk’s image was so different from that of ordinary arrangers who locked themselves in the recording studio and wrestled with the master keyboard.

“Good, good. His looks are good and his music is as good as his looks. Ha ha.”

The Concertmaster laughed for a bit and took his place to start playing.

“Who is going to command?”

“That man just now is going to do it.”

“He’s just a violinist.”

“Yeah. Since the song is short and simple... the senior violinist usually takes the lead. There isn’t someone to command.”

Jun Hyuk’s face turned dark at Jo Hyung Joong’s explanation.

“I see. This song is easy to lose the timing in without a commander... I guess they’re really skillful performers?”

“Of course we brought in A class people. They’re performers of Fine Philharmonic. They’re fairly famous. It’ll be fine.”

The performers who had been facing the two people saw the Concertmaster nod lightly to them to send them a signal as he began to move his bow with power.

When the elaborate stringed instruments started and the introduction ended with 2 verses as though fireworks had gone off, Jun Hyuk got up from his seat.

“Teacher, let’s go. I think it’ll be better to do the MIDI operations and make the orchestra parts with the equipment.”

“What? Why... Why do you say that?”

Jo Hyung Joong stuttered as he looked up at Jun Hyuk in surprise.

“What can we expect from performers who can’t even read the scores? I don’t need to hear anymore.”

The performers who had been watching Jun Hyuk’s actions and words, stopped playing. Their faces were more distorted than the surprised face of Jo Hyung Joong.

“Hey! Hold on. What did you just say?”

The Concertmaster could not hold back any longer and yelled while the rest of the performers looked on in disbelief. They had never even heard such insulting words from the conductor. The machines are better? They could not read the score?

“You didn’t hear me? I said that you can’t even read the score properly. Did you hear me well this time?”

They could not believe Jun Hyuk who was yelling with a frown. No arranger made a

judgment after just two verses no matter how the music did not come out the way they had intended.

They could not just stand back and watch if he was just copying a maestro he had seen in a movie or drama.

There were a few performers who had left their seats, and the Concertmaster came storming at Jun Hyuk with his violin.

“There there, let’s all calm down. Since Jun Hyuk arranged this song, let’s listen to his opinion first. Jun Hyuk, you have to explain carefully. It’s rude if you act like this all of a sudden.”

Jo Hyung Joong grabbed Jun Hyuk’s wrist and blocked him from the Concertmaster. From the Concertmaster’s stance, it seemed like he might throw his fist. He needed to get out of this troublesome situation. It was social etiquette to respect each other when they were not friendly and had met for the first time.

Chapter 64

“You’re looking down on it because it’s the theme song of an animated movie for kids and it’s pop music, right? Shin Hae Chul is the person who made an OST for a children’s animated movie with robots this grand. It’s not okay for you to underestimate him.”

Jun Hyuk looked angrier. He did not stand down and yelled at the Concertmaster.

“What are you saying we underestimated?”

“Are you this casual when you play Beethoven too? The first note of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 ‘Fate’ and this song are the same. Why did you take it out? Whether it’s classic or pop... everything has the same notes.”

Jo Hyung Joong blinked at Jun Hyuk’s words. He could not remember the first note of the symphony Fate.

The first verse of the famous Fate by Beethoven was not [bba baba bam~]. To be exact, it is [umbba baba bam~]. It started with 8 minutes of rest, or silence.

Two swordsmen hold their swords in a martial arts movie. Who will take out their sword first? The audience watches the scene with sweaty palms. This suspense. That is the role of the silence. With this silence that is like a divine move, the audience is able to feel both the suspense and openness at the same time.

Rest is also a note. The conductor and performers need to express this.

The ‘From the Sun to the Boy’ that Jun Hyuk had arranged starts with this silence as well. However, there was no suspense in the music the performers had just played.

It was difficult to find this suspense when listening to a CD. Before gramophones were invented, people needed to go to theaters to listen to Beethoven.

The music did not start when the conductor moved his baton vigorously from the podium. It started when the first movement stopped. Listening in person was grand because one could hear the music without missing anything like the 8 minute rest.

The Concertmaster realized why Jun Hyuk had insulted them saying that they could not read scores once he heard the words Beethoven's Fate Symphony. For a moment, his face became warm.

He had come out today with the thought that he would just make some pocket change. He had been thinking that a 5 minute pop orchestral accompaniment would take about an hour.

Never in their dreams had they thought that there would be a young kid who could detect their laid back state of minds. There were only 2 things left now. Should they ignore the kid's words and run out? Or should they accept it and play the music?

The 15 performers were only watching the Concertmaster's face. The choice was up to the leader.

The Concertmaster's face was red and as he was biting his lower lip, he was hanging on to his self-esteem.

Eventually, the Concertmaster went back to his seat and sat down. He had decided to play the music properly. He needed to recover his insulted self-esteem.

The music started again with the suspense that the rest on the score indicated, and ended after about 5 minutes. The musicians must have been satisfied with their performance, because they looked pleased.

The 16 pairs of eyes that were directed toward Jun Hyuk were not looking at him as an arranger. How about that? Are you going to keep being arrogant? Jun Hyuk was taking in all of their pompous gazes. With this, even that arrogant child would have nothing to say.

However, there was something that the performers did not know. Jun Hyuk had only listened to the world's best orchestras until now. If he had come out of an art high school and gone to a college for music, he would have grown up listening to other young people and would have experienced underdeveloped music.

Jun Hyuk had only been able to listen to CDs of the top orchestras in the world. He had even gone to watch live performances in person.

A hometown orchestra and not even the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra was not enough to satisfy Jun Hyuk's highly trained ears.

Jo Hyung Joong turned to Jun Hyuk in curiosity as to what his judgment was,

“What do you think? Is this good enough?”

“I think it’ll be better if I just live in your studio starting today to work on it. Don’t you think 3 days will be enough?”

It was difficult to withstand this severe criticism a second time. There were even people who had already placed their instruments in the cases. They had lost the reason to keep listening to this child and his unfitting assessment.

“Teacher Jo, we can’t work like this either. Tell him to do it himself like he said. We have no intention to keep playing around with this nonsense.”

Jo Hyung Joong thought that the Concertmaster’s protest was legitimate and thought that this accompaniment was of high enough quality. He thought that he needed to appease the huffing Concertmaster and continue recording, but even this became impossible with Jun Hyuk’s screaming behind him.

“Pu ha ha. What did you say? Doesn’t make sense? Your performing makes less sense. Let’s say you can’t do anything about the fact that you have no talent, but doesn’t it mean you only have the basics down if you don’t have concentration and can’t even understand what’s written down for you?”

“What? This little.....”

Jo Hyung Joong thought he was going to pass out. These performers had been difficult to schedule. He had to pay whether or not they recorded the song, and it was not a bad song no matter who heard it.

There was no performer who would comply just because demands were being made at them. It was the same for pop music session men.

If he were going to be this picky, they needed to have paid much more to hire top-class performers.

You get the music that you pay for.

Jun Hyuk’s continuing criticism made it so that the 16 performers could not shut their mouths.

“A senior violinist made four mistakes in a song that lasts only 5 minutes and 7 seconds, and the woodwinds couldn’t match each other’s timing six times. And lady on the oboe! Are you stupid? You have to put the music stand 20cm farther away. The sound is a mess because it bounces off the stand. You’re deaf if you can’t hear that. And...”

Jun Hyuk’s bitter words pointing out each of the mistakes that the 16 performers made continued. There were people who did not realize the mistakes that they had made.

When Jun Hyuk was finished with his criticisms, the sound of breathing could not even be heard in the room. There were a few people whose faces had turned red like the oboe player in her early 30s.

Chapter 65

Jo Hyung Joong broke the silence. He shrugged as he spoke,

“I see. I’m sure you all will know better if what he is saying is true or false... I don’t know.”

The Concertmaster heard Jo Hyung Joong’s words as an insult as well.

“This is just the last check before recording, not a concert. I don’t hear this as anything but him trying to point out our faults. I admit that he has an ear for music, but you should have just brought the Berlin Philharmonic in if it was going to be like this.”

The Concertmaster had said something he should not have. He meant that there was nothing he could do about it because they were getting the talent they had paid for. This angered even Jo Hyung Joong.

“I can’t agree with that. If Jun Hyuk’s criticisms are correct, this isn’t a level of checking before recording. That means this is the first time you’re trying to play it... It upsets me more that you didn’t think of practicing it once when you knew today would be the day or recording.”

Jo Hyung Joong who had always been smiling had become angry. The 16 performers left the recording studio at his reproach. Some left out of embarrassment, some left out of anger.

Jo Hyung Joong scratched his head in the empty recording studio.

“This has become quite bothersome.”

“Sorry, teacher. It’s because of me.....”

“No, I can tell by looking at those people who had nothing to say that you’re right. It’s okay. It’s definite for someone working with music to demand perfection.”

Jo Hyung Joong had the thought that he would need to bring in the Seoul Philharmonic if he wanted to satisfy Jun Hyuk, but that was impossible. His sight seemed to dim at

the thought that they would need to spend the next three or four days using the machines in the recording studio without sleep.

The phone call he received as soon as he got to the studio made him forget that they would not need to stay up all night.

After Jo Hyung Joong spoke on the phone for a while, he quickly called Producer Kim Ki Sik.

“Producer Kim, the first stage is MR, right? The backing band isn’t coming out?”

“Yes, the backing band is live from the top 5.”

“You know Jun Hyuk’s mission song, ‘From the Sun to the Boy’?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik had just been watching the video because the VJ had come running to him.

“You know we can’t work with the Fine Philharmonic you set us up with, right? Jun Hyuk didn’t like it and stopped it.”

“Yes, I heard from the VJ.”

The VJ had come running to him with news that he had filmed something great. Producer Kim had also wanted to shout in joy as he watched the video. The highlight was when the performers ran out with bright red faces.

Jun Hyuk had created a scene that could only be found in a drama. It was a reversal that made it so the money they would need to pay the performers was not going to waste.

They would need to cover the performers’ faces for confidentiality. He had picked up Jo Hyung Joong’s call while he had been happily thinking of how to edit the clip.

“The conductor just called to say that he will do it himself. He said that he’ll do it perfectly.”

“Really? That’s a surprise.”

“On the condition that they can perform live on the live broadcast.”

“What? On the live broadcast?”

“Yeah. He kept talking... but he just wants to get publicity for his orchestra since a local orchestra doesn’t have a name. He wants to go out on a national broadcast.”

It was difficult for a local orchestra to become well known unless the maestro was famous. There was no better publicity in a Korea where the place for classical was not big, than to go out on a broadcast.

There was even a case when a conductor of an OST with classical music had become famous overnight. Having a face or name go out on TV was better than any publicity money could buy.

“Ah.....”

“What do you think? Can you arrange it?”

“The picture looks good but... we might get feedback that we’re favoring him over the other kids.”

Going on the live stage meant that they were allowing for their faces and names to go on air. The drama in Producer Kim Ki Sik’s head became complete with the second reversal.

“The stage is a problem too. Is there enough space for 60 people?”

“Excuse me? 60 people?”

“Yeah, it’s the full orchestra. Ha ha.”

“We have to do it no matter what if it’s to that extent. Contact the conductor and let him know that it’s an okay. I’ll take care of the details with their representative.”

As Producer Kim Ki Sik got off the phone, he thought that though the conductor’s intention may be publicity, the opportunity was Jun Hyuk.

Jun Hyuk had the power to drag people in. He was like a powerful magnet. He thought that he himself might be getting pulled in to Jun Hyuk’s genius, but also could not stop thinking that Jun Hyuk may be more of a genius than he thought.

The episode two days ago had an average 4% viewer rating, while Jun Hyuk's air time was 6%. Last year, the ratings had remained under 2% during the area preliminaries.

Was there a reason to eliminate this Jun Hyuk at the end of two or three performances? The average person is fascinated by genius. What would happen if they showed everything that Jun Hyuk is capable of?

Producer Kim Ki Sik wanted to go over how this season would go again. He could show a completely different side from the last four episodes. Producer Kim had another worry to add to his list.

Chapter 66

“Lawyer. A lawyer from Daejung Law Firm has come looking for you. He said that he would like to meet with you.....”

“Daejung? What for?”

“He said he would like to tell you in person.”

“Really? Where is he?”

“I showed him to the meeting room for now.”

“Alright.”

Daejung is among the top 10 law firms of Korea. None of the lawsuits that Baek Seung Ho was currently working on involved Daejung. This must be in relation to a new lawsuit, and the only new lawsuit was that of Yoon Kwang Hun.

‘That Producer catches on quickly.’

A representative had come to take his offer on settling the case before going to court. Baek Seung Ho went to the meeting room, eager to meet the representative.

A familiar face was drinking coffee in the meeting room.

“Huh? Who is this? Lawyer Yoo.”

“You’ve been well? How long has it been? Has it been about... a year?”

Lawyer Yoo In Tae was two years Baek Seung Ho’s junior but since he was a year older, they spoke casually. They were not close friends, but had an appropriate relationship where they saw each other’s faces occasionally. It was the most comfortable distance to maintain in a professional relationship.

“You should have called before you came. You surprised me.”

“I thought of calling to meet somewhere outside too, but it’s official work.”

“Official work? What’s going on?”

When Baek Seung Ho slyly pretended he did not know, Lawyer Yoo scrounged his face as though his head hurt.

“It’s because of the reason why you’re getting so popular these days.”

“What? Are you talking about Jun Hyuk?”

“Stop. What show are you trying to put on when you know everything. I’m here because we took on that case.”

“Really? Where is it? It must be a big press office if they can get Daejung.”

A list of the biggest press offices passed through Baek Seung Ho’s head quickly.

“I got 8 press offices together. I thought you would find it bothersome to get everyone together, so I did it beforehand. You like it?”

“8 of them? Only Daejung.”

“You know we have pretty good business, it’s just our performance that falls short. Ha ha.”

Lawyer Yoo In Tae who was laughing casually began to speak comfortably,

“Lawyer Baek, let’s do it the easy way. Tell me what your conditions are.”

“First, what’s the extent of your authority? Do you have to report everything to your client?”

“I have to report it if it crosses the Maginot Line.”

“Don’t change the direction. How far is the Maginot Line.”

“Hey, Lawyer Baek! Isn’t it too much to ask to see the cards as soon as they’re dealt? Ha ha.”

After Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun's press conference, the internet had been on fire. Korean press offices had declined as tabloids and their dashboards had so many malicious comments that one outlet even shut down. After a week, it was quiet as though nothing had happened. It had already become a thing of the past.

If Peace's lawsuit started here, they would be lighting the fire again. The press offices wanted to avoid this situation. Any lawsuit was the subject of press, but press offices should not become that subject.

"Since the ball is in your court, you throw it. Then we can decide if we're going to avoid it or hit it. We're in defense."

"Okay. Give me the list of the press offices you're representing. The amount we're demanding is different for each outlet, so we need to check first."

Yoo In Tae took a piece of paper out and threw it on the table. Baek Seung Ho called an employee in to take the paper and whispered something in his ear.

A short while later, the employee handed Baek Seung Ho a print out and quietly walked out. Baek Seung Ho looked over the sheet and passed it to Yoo In Tae.

Yoo In Tae fixed his glasses and read the paper carefully.

"Wow... this is... harsh."

"Hey hey! You haven't fixed your habit of starting off by saying something is harsh?"

"This amount of money is saying we should meet in court. You don't want to settle? From what I recall, you don't like going to court."

"What are you talking about? There are times when I miss the smell of the court."

Yoo In Tae realized that there may be a trap in the amount that Baek Seung Ho proposed from his smug face.

"You're not assured you'll win, are you? It'll be hard to prove that the press offices did it deliberately."

"You're not asking what's important."

“What?”

“The grounds for that amount.”

Lawyer Yoo In Tae looked at the paper with the press offices and amounts and his eyes widened.

“Hey, Lawyer Baek. Are you asking them to hand this money over?”

Yoo In Tae and a lawyer on the team had stayed up all night reading all of the articles. They had separated the articles that would be judged as defamation and those that would not, to assign amounts before coming here.

However, their expectations had been completely passed. The compensation that Baek Seung Ho had proposed from each outlet was not the amount for articles, but more like their revenues.

“Only you, Lawyer Yoo. You think fast and catch on quickly, so there’s no reason for us to fight. Let’s work well together. Ha ha.”

The public opinion was that the press offices were the adversary. Jun Hyuk was gaining more popularity by the week. His popularity was at the point where the outlets that had released articles insulting Yoon Kwang Hun had no choice but to write about Jun Hyuk. If they went to court like this, there was no judge who could not keep the public opinion in mind.

Baek Seung Ho had demanded the cost of all of the advertisements that the outlets had gotten while writing articles about Yoon Kwang Hun. Since they had raised that money with false content, that money belonged to Yoon Kwang Hun. They had to give more money on top of that in the spirit of apologies.

They could not know the exact amounts of the advertisements, so they put together industry estimates. Yoo In Tae felt like he had been hit over the head.

If they wanted to show the judge how unjust this amount was, they would need to present the exact amount the press offices had made from advertisements. There was no way to show this injustice without showing what was going on behind the scenes.

“Lawyer Baek. You really think they made this much just from those articles? Do you know the unit price of advertisement clicks attached to those articles?”

“Why are you being like this? You know well yourself. I’m just demanding that much because I was told it’s the industry average. We’ll have to go through the outlets’ books if we want to be exact.”

It was as he had expected. If Baek Seung Ho wanted to do a tax audit, he was going to the heart of the press offices and their media repression. If this went to court and the account books of their profits were revealed, they might try to use that as evidence. The press offices would want to avoid this as well.

“This is too harsh. Isn’t this nothing more than Peace saying that they want to turn on the press offices?”

“That’s why you need to do well. What if we go to court and Daejung loses? Daejung will be alienated from the press offices as well. We’ll at least be making money. What about Daejung?”

If this case went to court, everyone would be at a disadvantage no matter who won. Regardless of the winner, the media outlets would need to reveal their books and the two law firms would be alienated from the press offices.

Even if they went to court, it would be a stalemate. If they ruled in favor of Peace, the press offices would retaliate. If they ruled in favor of Daejung, the public would retaliate. Judges would be hoping that this case gets settled before it reaches the court. Figuring everything out adequately and ending on friendly terms would make everyone happy.

“Lawyer Yoo. Stop thinking about it and show your cards. I showed you mine. How much do you think is possible?”

Baek Seung Ho had no intention to take this all the way to court. He just wanted to wrap it up with money like he had told Jun Hyuk he would do.

“Hold on. Let’s continue after I make a call.”

Lawyer Yoo In Tae took his phone and went outside the meeting room.

He spoke again once he came back into the meeting room more than 10 minutes later,

“To start, I reported it. Since we can’t just make a decision right away, I’ll go back to consult and come again tomorrow.”

Chapter 67

Baek Seung Ho said something that made Yoo In Tae who was packing his bag, stop.

“Should I give you a present?”

“Present? What’s this about?”

“There’s something we’re proceeding with apart from the press offices. The malicious commenters.”

“Commenters? Oh, the people who left spiteful comments?”

“Yeah, the commenters and the people who swore on SNS.”

Yoo In Tae sat in his seat again. He had guessed what the gift was.

“You saw the Supreme Court decision not too long ago, right? When they got \$5,000 from the people who wrote malicious comments on SNS.”

“Yeah, it was contempt?”

“We made a list. We got everyone including the people who personally called Yoon Kwang Hun, the people who sent text messages, malicious commenters, and SNS. There are over 300 people who did that more than once.”

There was no way out of it since there was even a Supreme Court ruling.

“You’re going to share some of that with us?”

“Up to half. What do you think?”

Half meant around 150 people. Even if they estimated \$3,000 per person, it would be \$450,000. What percentage would they make from the case? Yoo In Tae calculated that with the 40%, their fees would only be approaching \$200,000.

“So? Are you asking us to convince the press offices?”

“Oh we can’t do that, we’re lawyers. He he.”

Baek Seung Ho’s laugh meant that they should hold hands.

“What’s the percentage?”

“Take 60%. Yoon Kwang Hun doesn’t care about the money. If we’re frank with the calculations, they’re not losing out on much because Jun Hyuk is already getting offers for CFs for his status as a national star.”

Yoo In Tae had seen Jun Hyuk on TV. Regardless of his musical talent, his looks were enough to make him a CF star.

The number of people in his fan cafe that had been created after the press conference also proved his salability. Peace who had taken on all of Jun Hyuk’s legal matters must feel as though it had caught a big fish.

“You know it becomes a problem if we just accept that, right?”

Everyone would be able to tell that the two law firms had joined hands since the press offices were not dumb.

“Just change the name to another place. Anyway, my present is up to here. I’ll just leave the rest to you.”

Yoo In Tae left the meeting room with busy thoughts. His mind was busy, but it was busy with good things. It seemed that all he had to do was to go back to the office and draw up a basic blueprint.

“Oh wait. One more thing.”

Yoo In Tae came back into the meeting room as though he had forgotten something.

“What is it?”

“There are no public apologies on the public media or internet. That side is saying that they won’t do anything that hurts their pride when they’re settling with money.”

“Of course. We don’t need an insincere apology either. Don’t you think a fat lump of money will help heal the wound?”

There was an understanding that something would work out in the gaze that the two lawyers shared.



Lawyer Baek Seung Ho sent polite memorandums to press offices excluding the 8 that Daejung Law Firm had taken on. Since the large media outlets were settling in good favor, the small outlets that have a hard time should also show their apologies. It said that Peace would not turn down the opportunity to go to court if they denied this offer.

There were over 2,000 internet outlets. It was not a number that Peace could handle even if they allocated all of their manpower to it. Baek Seung Ho had thrown the fishing line to over 30 places that were worth any money and thought that it was a success even if half took the bait.

He was proud that it was time to reap from all of the hard work they had put in till now.

Yoon Kwang Hun did not care about the compensation. He had said that he would be satisfied with a proper music studio in the cafe's basement, and a studio with the best equipment and perfect soundproofing.

However, with the amount that they were expecting to reap, they could afford not just a studio, but three or four cafes in Misari.

Baek Seung Ho was satisfied that with this, he would have fulfilled a person's duty to someone who had done so much for him in the past.



Since the issue with Jun Hyuk's 1st mission song was taken care of, Jo Hyung Joong had to send Jun Hyuk back though it was unfortunate. The 2nd mission was songs by the judges. They only had 1 week to work on this.

"Jun Hyuk, you worked hard making music with me. You have to go to Yoon Jung Su now."

"Excuse me? We haven't finished recording the accompaniment....."

“Ha ha. That went well. It’s a full orchestral accompaniment. No, it’s a concert. They’re going to perform with you on the live stage. They’re going to decorate the final stage. Of course, the conductor will be there as well.”

A full orchestra on the live stage? This was basically a concert and not a contest! Jo Hyung Joong was laughing with a pleased expression at Jun Hyuk’s face of disbelief.

“So we don’t need to record now. They’re going to record the live stage and launch the track. You’re going to meet them two days before the live broadcast to rehearse. There’s no need to worry about it now.”

“Then.....?”

“You have to prepare the 2nd stage. Seung Hee and Hye Sung should have already started prepared with other producers yesterday. Also, Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung are in your group. Seung Hee was assigned to Lee Eun Jin.”

Jun Hyuk bowed to Jo Hyung Joong. Jun Hyuk who had thought that of scores and performances as everything in music felt as though his eyes had been opened to a new world while working with Jo Hyung Joong. He was sincerely thankful to Jo Hyung Joong who had shown him even a little bit of this world.

“Thank you for everything, teacher. I learned a lot.”

“What are you talking about? If anyone learned, it was me. What did I do? I’m almost sorry that I didn’t do anything. And it’s not like we’ll never see each other again. We’ll see each other often going forward. If you don’t study abroad.”

Chapter 68

It seemed Jo Hyung Joong had also watched the press conference from his mention of studying abroad.

“Ah, you saw it?”

“Of course. You thought I wouldn’t see it? You endured such a hard time well.”

Jo Hyung Joong’s hand that was holding Jun Hyuk’s as he pat his back was so warm that Jun Hyuk could feel that he had been sincerely concerned.

“I was able to forget because I was working on music with you. Thank you.”

Jo Hyung Joong did not forget the words he wanted to say before Jun Hyuk left,

“Also, if you do end up going abroad next year... let’s make music together before you leave. I wanted to work with you properly.”

“A record? How could I.....”

Jun Hyuk waved his hand as though it could not be, but his heart was beating fast.

“What are you talking about? I want to produce your debut album... Why? Do I fall short?”

“Oh, no. I wonder if I’m qualified to release an album.”

“What are you talking about? If you’re not qualified, no one in our country is. It’s okay if you don’t make money. It’s because I really want to make an album full of music at a high level.”

Making an album with my own music. Jun Hyuk’s heart beat faster when he imagined that a CD with his own music would stand with Yoon Kwang Hun’s thousands of CDs at the cafe.

“Teacher, I’ll come back once the broadcast is over. Thank you.”

Jun Hyuk could not let go of Jo Hyung Joong's hand and expressed his gratefulness multiple times.

As soon as Jun Hyuk sadly left the studio, the assistant producer opened his mouth,

"Will Jun Hyuk really go to study abroad?"

"I'm sure he will. He's good enough to play in bigger waters. And I think Jun Hyuk is already oriented to classic. No matter what music he's working with, he makes classic his base. Eventually, I'm sure he'll need to go abroad."

The assistant producer lightly hit his forehead,

"What a waste."

"What is?"

"Jun Hyuk said last time that he made dozens of pop songs. I wanted to see those all over this industry."

"He said that the cafe owner didn't throw any of them out and saved everything. They'll come out one day, even if it's not right now. And you think that kid will create a debut album with songs he made in the past? He'll fill it with new songs."

A producer did not know how a composer thought. The desire to use songs that were left for later disappears. It was in a creator's mentality to want to create and release new works.

It is said that the Beatles recorded dozens of songs and chose the ones that would go in their album. Reportedly, the record label was always disappointed that there were so many good songs that got taken out.

When they were working on a new album however, they never used an old song no matter how good it was, and wrote new ones. As they recorded in this way, there could be 50 more Beatles albums with the songs that they did not use.

Even now, the record label fits one of these songs in whenever they release a best hits album. They are making an enormous amount of money on the legacy that the Beatles left behind.

“Oh right.”

Jo Hyung Joong suddenly remembered something while thinking of the scores that Jun Hyuk had.

“What is it?”

“The symphony. Where’s the score for the symphony Jun Hyuk brought?”

Jo Hyung Joong found the score in a corner of the messy recording studio and started to look over it quietly. When compared with Mozart, it was a symphony written by a 17 year old genius though 10 years late.

He read the score full of expectations, but put the score down after the third sheet.

The assistant producer who had been looking at the 2nd sheet started looking for a cigarette,

“This... What is this?”

“I’ll say. Is this music? No matter how much we say it’s the post-modern era, isn’t this just noise?”

In the music they had heard from Jun Hyuk so far, his specialty was his compositions filled with beautiful melody like Mozart. However, not only was this not a beautiful melody, but its irregular arrangement made it difficult to even read.

“Can we say that this irregular sound that’s like noise is music?”

“There’s already a work that makes noise into music. It’s John Cage’s.”

premiered on August 29, 1952 in New York’s Woodstock. had four bandmasters, and each bandmaster’s score was completely blank. There was only a Tacet accent (to rest without performing) written on the sheet. The performer sat in front of the piano and opened the cover of the piano. The time had been decided randomly so the 1st bandmaster was 33 seconds, the 2nd bandmaster was 2 minutes 40 seconds, and the 3rd bandmaster had two sets of 1 minute 20 seconds. After that, the performer shut the cover on the piano again.

As a result, the performer had just opened the piano and sat still for 4 minutes and 33

seconds before closing the piano again.

In this absurd performance, the bustling noise of youths was the music. Even if the performer and audience had been silence, there would be a sound in the concert hall.

The sound of this performance changed by the location. It was a work that could be changed in infinite ways. However, this song was still considered a challenge to the meaning of music.

“Using a philosophical topic like that happens just once. From the second time, it’s just noise. No one will recognize it.”

“Hm... What do we do.....”

Jo Hyung Joong scratched his head. He had promised Jun Huk that he would show the score to an expert in classical.

He needed to keep his promise. It was something he did not know. Jun Hyuk’s song could be avant garde, and receive great recognition.

Chapter 69

Jun Hyuk who had returned to the dormitory could not sleep with the excitement that he would be performing with an orchestra. He had not thought that something like this would happen in the next 10 years, but the opportunity was right before him.

As he was sitting on the front yard, breathing in the cold fall wind and imagining the concert, Nam Seung Hee came next to him.

The staff had let them know what happened when Jun Hyuk left the dormitory for two days to take part in the press conference. Nam Seung Hee had wanted to say words of comfort or encouragement, but looking at his expression of happiness, she could not say it. She worked up the courage when she saw Jun Hyuk alone.

“It’s a relief that everything was resolved well.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Did you finish recording the 1st mission song?”

“No. They said I’ll be recording live during the broadcast. I’m going to Teacher Yoon Jung Su for the 2nd mission song tomorrow.”

Live recording? What kind of arrangement was it that they were doing a live recording? When she thought that it was Jun Hyuk who had broken all of the boundaries up until now, it was not anything to be surprised by.

“Oh, I see. I have senior Lee Eun Jin.”

“Did you hear my song in Teacher Jo Hyung Joong’s studio?”

“Yes. It seemed like most of the work on it was done.”

Nam Seung Hee swallowed and spoke carefully,

“What do you think?”

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me sing. What do you think?”

“Hm... Honestly?”

“Yes. Completely honestly.”

“Your voice is like chalk dust.”

“Chalk dust?”

“Yes. It has a soft touch, but it’s a little stiff? Like that. That’s why I don’t think you fit well with songs that are light and youthful.”

“Wait. Can we just speak casually? It’s a little uncomfortable. We’ve even completed a mission together.”

“Then what do I call you?”

“Since I’m 21, I’m an older sister.”

“Alright. Then I’m not going to use formal speech anymore.”

“Huh? Oh, sure.”

She was more taken aback that he had used casual speech so suddenly, but felt good that they had become friendlier.

“Then you’re saying the song now isn’t that great?”

“That’s right. Hm... The violin and flute, what’s lighter?”

“Obviously the flute.”

“But what if you play a sad song with the flute? And play a light song with the violin? It doesn’t fit?”

“No. That fits too.”

“That’s why the violin and flute are good instruments. They can express any emotion. You’re honestly not a very good instrument. Your tone doesn’t work well with light songs.”

If a childlike voice with a thin and high pitch were to sing Kim Kwang Suk’s ‘Around Thirty,’ would that emotion be delivered to this kid? That is what a tone from birth is.

Nam Seung Hee’s face turned dark. She was not stupid. She could tell from Teacher Jo Hyung Joong’s attitude toward Jun Hyuk. She could tell that Jun Hyuk’s talent in hearing music was better than that of Teacher Jo Hyung Joong’s.

Everyone in the dormitory had been upended because Jun Hyuk had said Jang Na Rae would be the winner. It was possible that everyone wanted to ask Jun Hyuk what place they were in.

“I thought you were going to be honest with me? I can’t sing?”

“Hm... To say it simply, you’re not good enough to digest any genre of music. You need to choose one genre to focus on. Then, your singing skill will improve... and you can expand your area. But give up the hip hop you like.”

“Hip hop... isn’t it?”

She had been expecting it, but she wanted to cry when she heard that she should give it up. Jun Hyuk kept rubbing salt in the wound as if he had not noticed this,

“You can’t do hip hop just by mumbling quickly. A specialty genre... rock, rhythm and blues, hip hop – if you don’t understand the essence of these perfectly, you’re just imitating it.”

If rock spirit was the resistance and rebellion of the older generation, hip hop was started in late 1970s in New York’s Harlem to bring out the core of the harsh realities.

The word essence related to music came as a surprise to Nam Seung Hee. Someone who was only 17 years old was talking about the essence of music.

She had tried to understand the emotion in one song. And she had worried about the high notes and techniques to digest that song. But a teenager telling her to think seriously about a genre as a whole?

She thought she could tell why Teacher Jo Hyung Joong had judged Jun Hyuk so highly.

“If you really need to do it, tell your story. Don’t you think the power of hip hop is telling your own story like a confession?”

Jun Hyuk’s lips turned up slightly at the sight of a discouraged Nam Seung Hee. In times like this, it seemed like age was not important. She even seemed cute with her dropped shoulders.

“There’s a song I made that matches your tone... I asked Teacher Yoon Jung Su to write the lyrics. It’d be perfect if you sang that.”

Nam Seung Hee felt like her eyes had sparked open at Jun Hyuk’s words. A song that was made for her?

“What? You made it for me?”

“Yeah. I haven’t written the lyrics for it, but it’ll be perfect for your tone. Since the 1st mission is a free choice song, take a look at it and do it if you want to.”

“What kind of song is it?”

“It’s a slow ballad with a bright tone.”

“A slow ballad?”

“Yeah. Oh, I’m going to Teacher Yoon Jung Su tomorrow, so I’ll ask him. If he finished the lyrics, take a look. You don’t need to use it if you don’t like it.”

Nam Seung Hee thought about why Jun Hyuk would have made a song for her. She had never heard that Jun Hyuk had made a song for anyone.

At times embarrassing affection that Jun Hyuk had shown towards her had been burdensome. She had thought that it had been purposefully created by the production team.

She had ignored it until now, but not anymore. Nam Seung Hee was sure that Jun Hyuk liked her.

However, Nam Seung Hee had no way of knowing that the way in which Jun Hyuk liked

girls was not like the way other average teenagers, no average boys did.



When Jun Hyuk entered the studio, Yoon Jung Su hugged him in welcome.

“I finally meet Jun Hyuk again. All of your problems outside are handled, right?”

“Yes. The lawyer told me not to worry about it because he’ll take care of it from now on.”

“Sure... You must have had a hard time. Now you have to focus on music?”

“Yes. That’s what I intend to do.”

Yoon Jung Su had fought with Lee Sung Chul to bring Jun Hyuk in. Lee Sung Chul had wanted to work with Jun Hyuk on his new album.

“Right. Can you turn off the camera for a moment? We have to talk about something very private.”

When Yoon Jung Su spoke to the VJ pushing a camera to his face, the VJ could guess what Yoon Jung Su was going to say. He was going to say something very realistic that could not be left documented. The VJ turned off the camera and went outside.

“Okay, you guys must know well by now, a broadcast moves the way a writer planned it out. It was part of the script that you guys came under my wing too. Jang Jun Hyuk, Jang Na Rae, Kwak Hye Sung. Why do you think this group was created?”

Everyone knew the reason, but Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung just looked at each other and could not answer.

“There’s the similarity that you don’t have agencies, right? My intention is to make it so you two can find agencies during the 1st and 2nd rounds. If you guys can’t show off your charm by the 2nd round, you might get eliminated.”

Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung’s faces became dark.

“Hey... Don’t look so discouraged. The fact that you made it to the finals means you’re

already professionals. Regardless, you guys will be able to live off of singing. Of course, I'm sure Jun Hyuk doesn't care?"

Yoon Jung Su took a glance at Jun Hyuk who had been standing with his head down, staring at the floor. Now, the whole nation knew that Jun Hyuk would be leaving to study abroad when this broadcast ended. Though he himself had not made a decision yet.

"Anyway, we'll prepare well so agencies will look for you two. You need to convince me first, since I am also the president of an agency. If I can feel your charm, you'll be contacted by other places. You guys can choose then."

Yoon Jung Su handed over CDs he had prepared.

"There are about three songs in each of those CDs. Na Rae and Hye Sung, listen to them in the next room. Since the arrangements are nearly done and the guides are recorded, decide if there's one that you like."

When the two left, only Yoon Jung Su and Jun Hyuk were left.

"I saw the press conference too, but you're going to study abroad?"

"It hasn't been decided yet."

While Yoon Jung Su had spoken with Jo Hyung Joong many times over the phone, he wanted to see how far Jun Hyuk's potential went. There was already something that he and Jo Hyung Joong had agreed on. Producing would be by Jo Hyung Joong, composition would be Jun Hyuk, lyrics would be by himself, with various artists to make Jun Hyuk's debut album.

Their intention was not to use Jun Hyuk to make money. They had both made enough money until now.

They wanted to make an album equivalent to that of Wild Chrysanthemum who had been number one in Korea for 30 years now.

"Can I say something?"

"Yes."

Jun Hyuk nodded.

“This is an issue of career. If you want to succeed in classical, you need to study abroad.”

“To learn theory?”

“Theory? Well, you can learn theory in Korea too. There aren’t just one or two professors who know theory well. And there are people who studied in our country who are recognized all over the world. The real important thing is people.”

“People?”

“Yeah. Music leaves my hand the second the melody in my head is moved to a score. After that, you have to work with a lot of people. If you study abroad, you’ll naturally meet those people.”

Jun Hyuk thought of Jo Hyung Joong. Even though it had only been for a month and it had not turned out well, he had also met the orchestra.

“One more thing. If you study abroad, I’m sure you’ll meet people who prepare the world as their stage? The more talented people are, the more they gather together. The people who are teaching you are already considered to be grand. As you meet with those people, you’ll share inspiration. That synergy is something tremendous.”

After Yoon Jung Su looked at Jun Hyuk’s face, he continued carefully,

“I highly recommend that you study abroad. If you go and hang out with people who are like you, the frustration you feel might disappear.”

Frustration. Jun Hyuk knew what this frustration Yoon Jung Su said was. It was when people looked at things in fascination when he thought of them as definite.

“I heard you told Hyung Joong that you would work on your debut album together before you go abroad?”

“Oh, that’s not it. We don’t know yet, so.....”

“Even if you go abroad, release an album once this broadcast is over. You have to leave something behind for it to become a memory. You try making a team. We’ll actively

help you.”

We? Jun Hyuk was curious as to who the we Yoon Jung Su was referencing.

“Ah... We haven’t decided on a way to do it. We’re thinking of making your debut album really cool.”

Yoon Kwang Su turned the topic to the mission song as though he had finished what he needed to say.

“You don’t know any songs by me, right?”

“I think I’ve heard some but.....”

Yoon Jung Su heard Jun Hyuk’s tone without confidence and laughed as he handed over an MP3.

“I chose a few in advance. There are four, so choose the one that you like. Let’s start from there.”

Jun Hyuk listened to the four songs on repeat. There was only one reason why he listened to the songs a few times. He could not think of a version that was arranged.

No matter how much he changed the genre of the four songs, there was nothing he liked. Yoon Jung Su was the judge who had been friendliest to him. For Jun Hyuk, his songs were not that great.

‘Is it due to the lyrics.....’

The three elements to configuring a song: melody, rhythm, and chord. Among these three essential elements, there was no lyrics. In classical, these three were the ultimate.

Opera had lyrics, but it was usually the Italian that is unfamiliar to most. Mozart’s ‘Figaro’s Wedding’ broke the language barrier easily. Even lyrics in a different language that could not be understood were sweet.

The power of the melody and chime made it so even the singer’s voice sounded like an instrument with a beautiful sound.

In modern popular music however, the lyrics were what pulled the song along. It was as though the lyrics of a song were even securing the song itself.

The rap genre completely eliminated the melody and excited the listeners with just the lyrics and rhythm.

Yoon Jung Su's music had the merit of putting everyday emotions into lyrics. These lyrics might be able to share these emotions with the average person, but to Jun Hyuk who had not experienced 'everyday emotions,' only words were being shared.

Jun Hyuk could not sympathize with Yoon Jung Su's music at all.

Finally, he turned the MP3 player off and thought about how he would bring it up to Yoon Jung Su while he listened to Jang Na Rae practice in the other room.

It was the first time he was hearing Jang Na Rae sing since the preliminaries. He had heard that she recorded Lee So Ra's song for the first song in the finals. This also meant that she had been accepted as a vocalist.

Jang Na Rae who was singing a song from Yoon Jung Su's youth was enough to surprise even Yoon Jung Su.

Chapter 70

Yoon Jung Su went towards Jun Hyuk who was listening to Jang Na Rae instead of the MP3 player.

“I heard you assessed Jang Na Rae as better than Jessica?”

“Who said that?”

“Hye Sung did. I heard you said Jang Na Rae would win?”

“If you look just at talent. But I heard the broadcast was already planned?”

“It’s not only like that. Broadcasts like upsets too. People love reversal dramas because they’re entertaining elements.”

A reversal drama with Jang Na Rae beating Jessica would not happen. A reversal drama was impossible unless the writers changed their script.

“That’s that, but why do you think that?”

“Jessica is a singing machine.”

Jun Hyuk settled it with two words.

“Isn’t a singing machine a compliment? Doesn’t it mean she sings that well without making any mistakes?”

Jun Hyuk shook his head,

“Jessica doesn’t become black just because she lived in America. R&B and soul is to black people what pansori is to Korean people. It’s impossible for people who aren’t black to express the essence of that music perfectly.”

“You’re saying there’s a lack of expression in the emotion?”

“No, I’m saying it’s impossible. Even if a black person lived in Korea for a long time and

spoke Korean well, it would be weird if they tried to sing pansori.”

Jun Hyuk shook his head again as he repeated that Jessica was just imitating.

“Listen to a recording of Jessica singing R&B and soul. Honestly, the over exaggeration is severe.”

They could interpret over exaggeration as emotional excess, but Yoon Jung Su could fully understand Jun Hyuk’s evaluation of Jessica.

“Then what about Jang Na Rae?”

“Her level of understanding a song is no joke. And her tone is really good.”

“What does it mean that she understands songs?”

Normally, understanding a song meant expressing the emotions of lyrics well. He thought that Jun Hyuk’s words might have a different meaning.

“She changes every song to the emotion that she felt. Jang Na Rae has the ability to make a sad farewell song sound like she’s saying she’s relieved that the person is gone.”

“Does that mean the voice is overshadowing the lyrics? So you don’t even think about the lyrics?”

“Yes, that’s it. Oh, that’s a good way to say it. He he.”

Yoon Jung Su thought that Jun Hyuk’s evaluation of Jang Na Rae was a bit excessive. He was certain that she is good, but she was not as good as Jun Hyuk said. If Jun Hyuk’s assessment was right, a star was born.

Yoon Jung Su recalled Jo Hyung Joong’s words again to keep Jun Hyuk’s words in mind. If Jun Hyuk was right, Yoon Jung Su needed to scout Jang Na Rae right away.

After a moment of thought, Yoon Jung Su spoke,

“Jun Hyuk.”

“Yes.”

“You want to try taking lead?”

“Excuse me? Lead?”

“Yeah. Tell Jang Na Rae what she’s falling short on. It’s okay if you fix it for her too.”

“Oy, no. How could I do that.....”

Yoon Jung Su did not mind Jun Hyuk and went to Jang Na Rae in the recording booth,

“Na Rae, what do you think? Would it be okay if Jun Hyuk did some directing?”

“Excuse me? Ah, yes. That’s okay.”

Jun Hyuk is the one who had singled her out as the winner, but she herself did not know the reason for that.

“Look, she said it’s okay. Try it.”

Yoon Jung Su pushed Jun Hyuk into the recording booth. Inside the booth, Jun Hyuk scratched his head and carefully wrote something on the score as he spoke,

“More calmly here... and go up on falsetto here since you don’t need to show that you can hit the high notes. And when you start here, go in half a beat late.....”

“Laid back?”

“Excuse me? Lay...? Well, anyway half a beat late. And don’t try to sing well. Try to sing the entire song a little more calmly. With the feeling that you’re telling someone else’s story to a friend, not your own.”

Even a very sad farewell story has a different meaning to each listener. Someone will sympathize and feel sad while another will not be able to and think that it is laughable to be so upset. Yet another person can feel that the farewell is a relief.

If a third party sings a song, the lyrics can change in any way. This is what Jun Hyuk meant by understanding a song.

Jang Na Rae saw Jun Hyuk who was standing so close to her she could almost touch his face, and felt her heart beat faster and her cheeks blush. Jun Hyuk’s words did not

come into her head. There was only one word she remembered,

“Calmly?”

“Yes. You can’t over exaggerate the emotion. This seems like a song about a jerk who loved one girl too much... Forget about trying to deliver the emotions of the lyrics. Just think that you’re singing a rhyme, since the meaning of the lyrics don’t matter.”

Yoon Jung Su who was listening from outside almost passed out. Lyrics were not important? Those were lyrics he had written during his youth in heartbreak over a girl he had broken up with, but Jun Hyuk was telling Jang Na Rae to treat it like a rhyme. On top of that, a jerk!

When Jun Hyuk came out of the booth, he signaled with his hand to Yoon Jung Su who was sitting blankly.

“Try listening to it. She should be able to get it after singing it five or six times.”

Jang Na Rae could not pay attention to the lyrics even without Jun Hyuk’s urging. She was already busy trying to focus on the directing that Jun Hyuk had filled her score with.

Though she made mistakes where she missed the beat, but Jun Hyuk looked satisfied. If she practiced a little more, she would get used to the song and it would become more natural.

Jang Na Rae was still lacking the calm that Jun Hyuk had demanded, but the changes were starting to take shape.

Yoon Jung Su did not know that his sad ballad could become so colorful with adjustments in just the technique.

Musician Dittersdorf who had worked at the same time as Mozart was recognized as one of the best musicians along with Salieri. He had gone around bragging that not even Mozart could catch up to him. The introduction of his symphony in D major was configured with two tones that did not vary in height but only in length.

The song is so boring it is difficult to listen to. It continues without straying once from the audience’s expectations.

Mozart took this boring song and slightly changed it to use it as the introduction of his song. That is none other than the famous Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. He had clearly shown Dittersdorf the gap between them.

The ability to create a completely different and colorful song with a slight change. It seemed his song had been reborn completely differently with Jun Hyuk's modifications. How could his music that had topped the charts have been so dull?

Yoon Jung Su thought that he was like Salieri. The color of the song had changed entirely with a little directing.

He had the thought that Jun Hyuk might not have pointed Jang Na Rae out as the winner because of her talent. It was because Jang Na Rae was the person who could best take in Jun Hyuk's directing.

To think about it from the other end, Jessica was not qualified to take Jun Hyuk's directing.

Yoon Jung Su realized why Jun Hyuk was called an arranging genius. He could arrange any song to its best in moments. The more surprising aspect was that he was able to get a grasp of a performer or singer's talent and arrange the song to display their best.

When Jang Na Rae had sung Jun Hyuk's version of the song for the 3rd time, he looked very pleased. It seemed it was almost at the level he desired.

His ballad that was like a sad wailing had become a colorful song with a few changes in technique. It was as though a sad violin solo had become an elaborate orchestra symphony.

Yoon Jung Su looked curiously at Jun Hyuk as he heard Jang na Rae's completed song. He had recognized Jun Hyuk's genius before Jo Hyung Joong did, but he had thought Jo Hyung Joong's praises were exaggerated. However now, he realized that Jo Hyung Joong's high praises had fallen short.

The other people in Yoon Jung Su's studio looked at Jun Hyuk as if he were a monster. How could he change the singer and song's color with just 5 minutes of directing?

Jun Hyuk felt uncomfortable with everyone looking at him. Was Yoon Jung Su not looking at him in the way he had expressed Jun Hyuk's frustration before?

Yoon Jung Su who saw Jun Hyuk's expression realized what was happening and quickly changed the mood,

"There there. You guys record Na Rae's song. We'll work on it again after we hear the recording. Na Rae, let's go one more time."

After Yoon Jung Su sent Na Rae the signal, he took Jun Hyuk and left. The two went to the roof of the studio and did not speak as they breathed in the cold air.

After a while, Yoon Jung Su opened his mouth. He did not look at Jun Hyuk but at the view from the roof as he spoke,

"This will happen more going forward. People will look at you as if you're unique. Those looks will be full of adoration and jealousy. I was really jealous of your talent just now, too."

Jun Hyuk quietly looked up at Yoon Jung Su, but Yoon Jung Su kept looking forward.

"You changed a song that I spent over a month pouring my feelings over into nothing in a matter of 5 minutes. No one will even pretend they've seen this kind of talent before."

"Teacher, I just..."

"I'm not reproaching you, I'm in awe. You have to accept the burdensome gazes you receive as definites. It's the attention given to stars. If that attention is gathered... it'll be to the point where you won't have a personal life. That's what a star is and you're already a star. That's not because of your good looks and your height, but your musical talent.

Jun Hyuk did not understand what Yoon Jung Su was saying. His name was just starting to get known, and it was in gossip not music.

"Do you know how many calls Hyung Joong and I received? Over dozens. They're calls from agencies asking me to talk about them to you. That's even after the news that you'll be studying abroad next year came out. There are dozens are companies that are dying to sign you on."

Jun Hyuk was thinking that this talk about agencies are encumbrances. Music was made when musicians came together. He had fully realized while filming for the

broadcast that agencies only thought of money.

“Just accept it and enjoy it. Think of the looks you get as looks of admiration. As you continue to make great music, the looks of admiration and jealousy will turn into respect. I can bet my life savings that you’ll become a respectable musician. Ha ha.”

Yoon Jung Su who laughed at his lame joke changed the subject,

“Okay, now should we talk about your mission song?”

Jun Hyuk could only scratch his head at the mention of mission.

“What? It’s hard to make a choice? This... well this is kind of embarrassing.”

“Ah... That’s because the songs you gave me are so unfamiliar. They’re so different from your songs that are well known.”

“Honestly, there’s a reason why I chose those songs.”

Yoon Jung Su had a wide smile as though he had something fun planned,

“Try making a dance song.”

“Excuse me? A dance song?”

Dance? Dance is the music Yoon Kwang Hun likes least. Of course he had almost never heard it.

“Hyung Joong suggested doing something fun. Your interest in machines grew while you were working with Hyung Joong?”

“Yes.”

“You don’t care about winning anyway, right? And it’s not a situation where you can last very long without singing. Since we prepare up to the 3rd round before the live broadcast, I’m sure it’ll end there. The broadcasting station is focusing on showing all of your genius.”

Yoon Jung Su continued on quickly when he saw Jun Hyuk’s uncomfortable face to avoid any unnecessary misunderstandings,

“I’m not telling you to do this for the broadcast. Since you had producing in your DNA, it wouldn’t be bad to use this opportunity to try a new genre.”

“Mixing is important in dance music, but I don’t know the machines that well yet.”

“I’ll put two pressing birds on you, so try it out as much as you want.”

“Pressing bird? What’s that?”

“Um... You can think of it as a 2nd or assistant composer and arranger. If you hum the melody line, they’ll make the chord progression and melody on the master keyboard. And you know how they use a lot of electronic sound effects? Since it’s hard to write that in a score, you would just put it in on the spot.”

It was a scene that could be seen on broadcast often. A singer who is known to be capable of writing his own songs always has a composer sitting next to him while he’s working on his music in the recording studio. Though it seems like they’re composing together, unless the singer’s level is extremely high, the composer was completing most of the music. The singer only made a few verses of melody and the person who completed the whole song was the pressing bird, the composer. They are called pressing birds because they need to press on the master keyboard in countless ways until the song is complete.

“Ah, so you’re saying if I say I want the exhaust of a motorcycle as a sound effect, they would be able to insert it right away?”

“Right, they play that kind of role. And if it’s a person that does well, a collaboration is also possible.”

Jun Hyuk’s expression brightened as soon as he found out that he could insert any song he wanted to.

“Are you telling me to do electronic dance music?”

“Oh, you think fast. What do you think? You want to try it?”

“Um... But teacher, I don’t really like electronic.”

“Why? Is it because it’s at a lower level than classical?”

“No. What levels are there in music? I just get bored because it’s a repeat of the same simple rhythm.”

It was possible for someone who enjoyed listening to classical and jazz to think that electronic with EDM as its representative music is simple.

“Um... Jun Hyuk. Could it be that you don’t know that there are many uses for music?”

“Uses?”

“You only heard music in the cafe practice room?”

“Yes. Most of it... I watched TV occasionally.”

“There’s music like classical where you concentrate and enjoy it, and there’s music like jazz and the blues where the best way to listen is at a concert hall. But it’s hard to appreciate electronic that way.”

Yoon Jung Su could not help but smile at the thought that he was pushing Jun Hyuk into a new world.

Not all music needed to have the lifespan of 200 years like classical does. A song could show its worth just by staying alive for two or three months and giving people joy in that time.

Even the song that had shaken the world, Psy’s ‘Gangnam Style,’ was not played anywhere 3 years after.

“You’ll know better by experiencing it yourself than hearing it hundred times, right?”

“Excuse me?”

After Yoon Jung Su brought Jun Hyuk back to the recording studio, he called Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung who had been practicing.

“I’m sure you guys have been stressed while locked up, practicing.”

The two had inflated expectations at Yoon Jung Su’s soft expression. Were they going to have dinner together?

“I’ll relieve that stress for you today.”

Yoon Jung Su said something unbelievable after hesitating,

“When we’re done practicing, let’s go to a club. Oh, I won’t get in because I’m old, so go with the recording studio people. There’s a good place where they don’t film and the people don’t care about celebrities.”

Jang Na Rae just stared blankly while Kwak Hye Sung, who looked least likely to fit in at a club, cheered.

Chapter 71

As they descended down the stairs to the club, the bass bumping through their bodies grew louder.

While they were sitting in an area on the 2nd floor, Kwak Hye Sung and Jang Na Rae were already moving to the music.

Jun Hyuk was already out of his mind. How could there be a place like this in the world? More than the music, the first thing that caught Jun Hyuk's eye was the girls in promiscuous clothing, and the second thing was the way they moved.

There were women who moved lightly to seduce men, but there were more women who left their bodies to the simple beat and shook without a care. It was the same for the men. There were men who looked at the women more than they cared about the music and dancing, but there were also a lot of men who were dancing wildly.

Fast beat, a volume that could be felt with the entire body, the drunkenness that alcohol provides. All of this combined to make it hot in the club.

After drinking two or three beers, Kwak Hye Sung and Jang Na Rae could no longer stay seated and went into the dancing crowd. They also moved their bodies so they were inseparable from the crowd.

There was no other way to describe this spectacle than as a culture shock.

Music to Jun Hyuk meant there is a performer and an audience, the audience becomes immersed in the music that the performer delivers, and they cheer and applause in response to an excellent performance.

However, there was no performance in this place. It was just a DJ mixing with machines to make a fast bass beat.

There was no audience listening and enjoying it either. This was a place to leave your body to the music and move on instinct. Jun Hyuk also felt the primordial joy provided by the music. He could feel his shoulders moving to the music.

People here were moving to music like cavemen dancing to the sound of a simple drumming.

While Jun Hyuk was awed by the world of clubbing, Yoon Jung Su was having dinner with Son Jin Young.

“Take a look at this song.”

“Oh, you wrote a new song?”

“Don’t say anything and just look at it.”

Son Jin Young took the score from Yoon Jung Su and hummed to the notes.

“Hey, Jung Su! You wrote a really good one for the first time in a while! Are you giving it to me?”

“Why is a judge being like this? I want to hear your comments.”

“You don’t even need to look at the sabi. It’s good just from looking at the intro and verse. You really do find appreciation in emotional ballads.”

There was no insincerity in Son Jin Young’s evaluation. This had implemented a fresh ballad unlike songs these days that were sad ballads or dance songs with fast beats.

“I wrote the lyrics to this, but someone else composed it.”

“Who?”

“Guess. It’s someone we both know.”

“There aren’t just one or two people that we both know.”

“Ha ha. That’s true. Jun Hyuk wrote this song. I wrote the lyrics for a week.”

“Jun Hyuk? That or... rascal?”

Son Jin Young almost said orphan. There is a big difference between orphan and rascal. In the entertainment industry, rascal is not a slight.

“Yeah, and he said he made that song for Nam Seung Hee.”

“Nam Seung Hee? The Nam Seung Hee in our agency?”

Son Jin Young’s eyes widened at the mention of Nam Seung Hee.

“Yeah. He made the song to match her tone after he listened to her voice during the 2nd mission. In a day.”

How could he create a melody like this in a day? Son Jin Young stuck out his tongue.

“But why did you write the lyrics?”

“Jun Hyuk doesn’t have the emotions to write lyrics of affection like this. It’s understandable when you think of the environment he grew up in.”

He had grown up in difficult conditions. No, it had been too shattering to be called difficult. How could a child like that have experienced emotions of love and farewell, that could be seen as a luxury?

Yoon Jung Su met eyes with Son Jin Young,

“What do you think?”

“Let me see. Will this fit well with Seung Hee?”

It was unnecessary to ask. Of course it fit well. However, it was far from the style and commodity that Son Jin Young was pursuing.

Son Jin Young used a thorough calculation to choose people to train.

Body proportions that would come out well on TV, the ability to show sexiness through dance – he chose each by the role they would play in a girl group.

To him, music is just a tool that can bring out sensuality. It is a time when music is no longer for the ear, but visual. Music worked to support an elaborate and sexy performance. It is now rare for artists to be able to make money with only their music.

He needs to make singers that the public wants to see. Singers that people only wanted to listen to did not make money.

It was the reality of Korean pop music that out of the overall sales that SN Entertainment, one of the largest agencies made, only 16% was from track sales and concerts. Now, music itself does not make money.

They needed to make money with the fees from drama, CF, entertainment program, and event appearances.

No event looked to hire a rookie singer with great vocals. There was always a line of events looking for pretty and sexy girl groups regardless of the music.

Even sign star Shin Ji, who is in a JSY girl group, became a star overnight after appearing in a popular movie. It was not music.

Due to these situations, it was understandable that Son Jin Young is hesitant at the mention of a ballad.

“If Nam Seung Hee doesn’t use this song, our singer is going to use it.”

At Yoon Jung Su’s words, Son Jin Young’s hand went up,

“Hang on. You’re sure Jun Hyuk wrote this song for Nam Seung Hee?”

“Yeah. He said it’s a gift for Nam Seung Hee. Producer Kim even recorded it. I’m pretty sure he’ll be editing that right now. He’s trying to make an atmosphere of the two as a couple.”

“A gift... This paints a pretty good picture.”

“You’re doing it again. I can hear the wheels turning in your head.”

Son Jin Young was better at business than he was at music. It was possible that he had already drawn up the whole picture in his head.

“Then it basically means that this song becomes Nam Seung Hee’s debut song.....”

“I’m sure it will.”

Nam Seung Hee was participating on the program to become known. What if she released her first single after the broadcast? The fees to market one debut song was tremendous. This could be an opportunity to save on that.

The program's viewer ratings were rising steeply because of Jun Hyuk right now. If the first episode's eye of the storm, Jun Hyuk were to play the piano as well, could there be better marketing than this?

With this, the calculation was complete and the picture had been drawn.

"Bro, let's meet Producer Kim first."

The two men left the half-eaten food and rushed to the broadcast station.

Chapter 72

“Jin Young – Director Son, I mean. You’re asking for too much like this.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik could not believe it. He wants to release a first single on broadcast? Even though it’s a free choice song mission, this is too much.

It made him uncomfortable that these two had come to make an unreasonable demand when they were in a situation where they were already on edge.

“It’s not impossible. You’re not going to use Jun Hyuk when he’s the eye of the storm right now? What’s better than this?”

“The picture does come out if Jun Hyuk plays the piano. But right now, the picture is that this is a love serenade that Jun Hyuk is giving Nam Seung Hee. If this happens, Nam Seung Hee will have a million anti-fans as soon as she debuts. Is that okay?”

“It’s a thank you if she has a million anti-fans, no?”

Yoon Jung Su was bantering and Son Jin Young spoke with force to convince Producer Kim Ki Sik,

“It doesn’t matter. I have to give her the lowest score and Jung Su can’t give her a high score either. He’s the lyricist.”

Nam Seung Hee’s elimination after the first stage would be a catharsis for Jun Hyuk’s fans. She dared to approach ‘our Jun Hyuk’ and she fell flat. This was not a bad look either. This would be eaten up as a reversal drama.

“Good. I’ll okay it if Jun Hyuk plays the piano and Nam Seung Hee is eliminated. How are you going to take care of the revenue issue?”

Who was the producer to take 40% of the entire revenue was the only issue left now. Would it be MV channel? Or would JSY do it? The fact that Producer Kim Ki Sik was discussing the revenue issue meant that he was not going to budge.

“It’s a producer issue. There’s no problem if we do it as MV channel?”

With Son Jin Young's acceptance, Nam Seung Hee's first stage was completed. Producer Kim Ki Sik put in the last nail,

"Good. We need to get a definite answer from Jun Hyuk that Nam Seung Hee can use the song. Lastly, take care of the composition fees. If something goes wrong, my neck is on the line."

Son Jin Young was not worried about Producer Kim Ki Sik's concerns. The person who made the song said that he would give it to them, so there would not be a problem there. He could just pay out enough of the composer fees.

However, there are more occasions when things do not go as planned.



"How was it? Did you have fun yesterday?"

"Yes, teacher. For the first time in a while... All of my stress went away."

"If I had gone to the club everyday instead of the gym, I would have lost 80kg by now."

Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung had dark circles, but their expressions were bright. Yoon Jung Su wanted to know how Jun Hyuk felt. How had he taken it in?

"Jun Hyuk, what did you think? I heard you were sitting the whole time."

"Ah, yes. Dancing for me is....."

"It's too bad you're still a minor and can't drink. If you had a drink and got tipsy, you would have danced a lot too."

He wished they had given Jun Hyuk a few drinks. If he had felt the great chemistry that comes from alcohol and a simple beat, he could make amazing music.

What Jun Hyuk needs most is not musical theory, but various experiences.

"Do you have any thought of trying it out? Or do you want to select a different song?"

"I understood why you gave me the four songs. Your intention was to do EDM from the start?"

“Ha ha. I got caught. That was Hyung Joong’s idea. We wanted to show a new stage and we wanted to see you in a genre that you wouldn’t normally touch. Of course the production team was all for it. It’s a first attempt, but we thought that it would be possible if it’s you.”

Yoon Jung Su examined Jun Hyuk’s expression. His expression already seemed positive.

“Then have you thought about which of my songs would be good as dance music?”

“I had the thought that it would be fun to combine the four songs.”

To sample from the four songs and combine them? Yoon Jung Su could not easily connect the four songs.

“What? Combine the four songs? Won’t the flow be interrupted?”

“No. I can make the four songs sound like one. It’ll flow naturally.”

He was always much further ahead. How did he think of mixing the four songs?

Yoon Jung Su’s expectations on how the EDM Jun Hyuk made would take shape were inflated.

“Jun Hyuk, can you talk to me for a minute?”

Yoon Jung Su took Jun Hyuk to a cafe nearby.

Yoon Jung Su ordered coffee and handed over a score,

“Do you want to take a look at this?”

The score Yoon Jung Su had handed over was the ballad Jun Hyuk made.

“This is what I made. Did you write all of the lyrics?”

“Yeah, take a look at the lyrics. The song is so good that the lyrics are bound to get overshadowed.”

There were refreshing lyrics to match the cool and fresh melody before him. The story

was of a girl and boy who were each other's first loves and were honestly confessing the feelings they had been hiding.

Jun Hyuk murmured the lyrics along to the melody and put the score down,

"Uh... goosebumps."

"What? Ha ha. Goosebumps? Then it's a success. A first love normally causes goosebumps."

Jun Hyuk was surprised that Yoon Jung Su who is in his mid-40s could describe a lively first love. Jun Hyuk could not know if he is rich in emotion or good at observation, but it is indeed a talent that he can find something in flitting moments.

"What do you think? You like it? Or should I write it again?"

"No, I don't know lyrics anyway. Didn't you say it's a success if I got goosebumps? Then that's fine."

Yoon Jung Su took a peek at his watch and waved toward the cafe entrance. Son Jin Young was coming in, waving his hand.

Son Jin Young motioned for an awkwardly standing Jun Hyuk to sit down, and settled down next to Yoon Jung Su.

"Sorry. I'm a little late, right?"

"It's okay, we just got here too."

As awkward laughter drifted over the coffee table, Son Jin Young opened his mouth,

"You know that song you made? The one you gifted to our Seung Hee?"

Son Jin Young put emphasis on the word 'gift'.

"Ah, yes. You're talking about this?"

Jun Hyuk gestured to the score he had put down.

"Yeah. We're thinking of using that on the first stage of the finals. What do you think?"

“I don’t care. I already gave that song to Nam Seung Hee.”

“Great, thanks. And there’s one more thing... Can you play the piano on the stage?”

“Me? They do the accompaniment as an MR.”

“Yeah. We’re going to create the MR without the piano.”

“Yes, that’s fine. It’s not difficult or anything.”

The two men looked more comfortable when Jun Hyuk brushed it off. And Son Jin Young gave Yoon Jung Su a slight look. The more difficult something was to talk about, the better it was for someone more familiar to bring it up.

Yoon Jung Su lowered his tone and began to speak gently,

“Jun Hyuk, this is uncomfortable to talk about. We can’t forget to talk about things dealing with money.”

“Money?”

“Yeah, it’s the composition fee.”

“Oh, it’s something I made for fun... I guess that can be worth money.”

A song made for fun. It was something said without much thought, but it tugged at Yoon Jung Su’s heart. It was like a blade to criminals who had to crack down and suffer for several months to complete one song.

Son Jin Young began to speak cautiously again,

“Jun Hyuk. JSY will buy that song. The average composition fee for rookie composers is...”

“Teacher, give me one second.”

“Yeah.”

Jun Hyuk went to the coffee shop counter and brought a memo pad and pen.

“You can call this number for issues dealing with money.”

“Who’s this number?”

“It’s the company in charge of the proceedings right now. I’m not allowed to discuss money or contracts going forward.”

“By any chance, is this company Peace?”

“Oh, it is. Peace. Lawyer Baek Seung Ho is in charge.”

The two men just looked at each other and blinked. They had no intention of receiving Jun Hyuk’s song for free. They were thinking of giving him adequate fees for a rookie composer, but a lawyer?

Chapter 73

Between the two, Yoon Jung Su was more surprised. The shock was great. Usually, lawyers did not get involved in this industry whether they gave the song first or they received the money to write a song. Since they were friendly, they trusted each other and paid an adequate amount.

If Jun Hyuk was already appointing lawyers, no singers or companies would want his songs no matter how good they were. They would all disregard him as a jerk who wanted money.

Jun Hyuk had not even made a proper debut in the entertainment industry, but he had created a firewall because of what he had experienced so far. It was regrettable.

Son Jin Young was already frowning. A brand new rookie who had been on broadcast once and had not even released a single was telling him to talk to a lawyer about money? And that was in the presence of a veteran senior. Jun Hyuk may have said it without much thought, but the person listening wanted to just give up the song.

However, they could not just overthrow everything when they had already convinced the main producer of the broadcast station. Son Jin Young grit his teeth and took the memo with the lawyer's phone number.

"Alright, I'll take care of this. Jung Su, I'm a little busy. I'll get up first. Sorry."

Yoon Jung Su could fully understand how Son Jin Young was feeling. He was already bearing through a lot just by suppressing his anger.

Jun Hyuk is not the only person with rights to this song, but also himself as the lyricist. There had been the prerequisite that the song was for Nam Seung Hee and he had written the lyrics accordingly. If something went amiss with the lawyer, he would become laughable.

However, Yoon Jung Su did not speak anymore. He thought that he must take time and slowly teach Jun Hyuk the rules and etiquette of this industry.



Lawyer Baek Seung Ho did not know that Jun Hyuk had written a song until he got a call from JSY. After quickly confirming, he met with the people coming to him with a contract.

“We are here from JSY. We’re here because of the song that Jang Jun Hyuk made.....”

“Oh, yes. I was waiting for you. But I haven’t heard the details relating to JSY.”

“I see. I guess you may not have heard because Jun Hyuk is living in the dormitory.”

The JSY legal team briefly described how Jun Hyuk wrote a song for Nam Seung Hee and that they were there to buy the song.

Baek Seung Ho reviewed the contract that JSY passed over.

“I see the composition fee is \$5,000.”

“Yes. That’s the industry average amount.”

“I’ll have to discuss with Jun Hyuk, but do you know that Jun Hyuk left matters of money to my discretion?”

“Yes. That’s why we are sitting in front of you right now.”

This was the first time Baek Seung Ho was meeting with someone in regards to a song or composition fee, but it was also the first time JSY was meeting with a lawyer to acquire one song. It was custom for the musicians to settle these issues themselves to just send a contract back and forth.

“There is one thing I can tell you for sure. I don’t know what Jun Hyuk is thinking, but he will follow me if I say ‘no’.”

“I don’t know what you’re trying to say.”

“It’s simple. We won’t sell it at such a low price.”

“Whew.....”

This is why JSY did not like when lawyers got involved. They had a habit of unconditionally rejecting the first proposal. Lawyer made simple issues that could be settled in a friendly matter, difficult.

“Don’t look at it like that too much. We have good reasons for this.”

“Should we listen to those good reasons?”

“The key element of a transaction is not whether or not a poet wrote a song. The important thing is necessity. It’s a world where people pay \$7,000 for a brand name handbag that doesn’t cost \$50 to manufacture. Why? Because they need it. So don’t you think it’s a song that’s needed if a big company like JSY is trying to buy it for just \$5,000? I want to sell it at an expensive price to someone who needs it.”

JSY was starting to dislike lawyers even more. Even though what they were saying made sense, they said it in a way that made the listeners feel unpleasant.

“We’ll sign this contract in a year.”

“Excuse me?”

It is over if he said that he would not sell it, but what did he mean by a year later?

“In one year, Jun Hyuk will probably be worth 10 times more. Bring back a new contract, or we’ll meet in a year.”

Baek Seung Ho knew that the value of goods changed the future. If they settled on \$5,000 for Jun Hyuk now, he would be \$5,000 even when he was worth 10 times more in the future.

The important fact was that no one yet knew Jun Hyuk’s worth. There was no idiot who would sell a diamond in its rough form without buffing it. They need to wait while sharpening and cleaning it to create its best appearance.

It was not even a situation where they were lacking money. It was not a time to hurry, but to wait until his elaborate and shining self appeared. Baek Seung Ho firmly believed that this was the best decision for Jun Hyuk.

JSY’s side that was not able to receive Jun Hyuk’s song took the contract and went back to the office. They needed to hurry up and let Director Son Jin Young know.

“Hey! I can’t believe it. The little brat is being arrogant because he gained a little popularity... Forget it. We don’t need it.”

Son Jin Young did not like Jun Hyuk or the ballad from the beginning. The answer was to go with a sexy performance as JSY usually does.



“Jung Su, we’re going to pretend the thing with Jun Hyuk’s song never happened. Honestly, I don’t even want to talk about it.”

Yoon Jung Su who had discerned Son Jin Young’s thoughts got off the phone and told Jun Hyuk.

“Jun Hyuk, have you heard the news?”

“Yes? What news?”

“The lawyer you mentioned said that he would not give the song to Nam Seung Hee. They said he asked for a lot of money.”

Yoon Jung Su was hesitant to talk about it, but he spoke cautiously.

“Did he?”

Unexpectedly, Jun Hyuk showed a dull reaction.

“Um... I don’t think Nam Seung Hee will be able to sing the song if it goes like this.”

“Well that’s fine. Someone else can sing it.”

“But you made that song for Seung Hee.”

“Not exactly. I just made the song because I liked her voice when she sang the jazz song I arranged.”

“It’s a song created for a voice and not a person?”

“Wow, you speak so well. A song created for a voice. I’ll have to keep this memorized.”

Yoon Jung Su saved his words as he looked at a Jun Hyuk who was smiling naively. He thought that there would be no need to explain about things like money, business, and industry fees to a child who was only just 17 years old. He comforted himself thinking that as someone with a right to the song, he could just push it back.

It was an old song. No matter when it was released, they could get the tribute for it.

“Alright. Then we’ll think about that song later and make the mission song now. I’ll put two producers I work with on you, so try making something really cool.”

“The pressing birds you talked about?”

“Ha ha. Yeah, pressing bird. But you can’t call them that to their faces. It’s a term that denigrates them.”



Jun Hyuk spent half a day using his cellphone and listening to a computer hard drive with a sound library full of sound effects. It was full of all the sounds in the world. It was to the point where he wondered what had not been included since there were even the sounds of people yawning and burping in different versions.

After half a day passed, Jun Hyuk abandoned his intention to listen to all of the sounds in the world. Eventually, he did not even get to listen to half and picked among the sound effects used often in the electronic line that the producer chose to listen to.

After the group of sound effects was compiled, Jun Hyuk and the two producers sat in front of a monitor that showed sounds from the master keyboard. The people at Jo Hyung Joong’s studio had already let them know that Jun Hyuk is a perfectionist. They had heard that he even detected the sound of an oboe bouncing off of a music stand.

If a kid with an ear like this had the ability to see soundwaves with his eyes, it was obvious that he would not look past even the smallest issues. The two producers already had a grim feeling that they may need to work for the next few days to complete the song.

“First off, do you have a separate track for the voice of the song Teacher Yoon chose?”

“Of course. Do you want it?”

“Yes. Please let me hear them in order.”

Jun Hyuk kept working on stretching and shortening the vocal tracks of the four songs. In more extreme cases, he did not hesitate to shorten it by three times. A producer threw him a question,

“But Jun Hyuk, you’re not going to sample it? What verse are you going to take out to use? Isn’t it easier to take out just that part to work with?”

“No, I’m not sampling it. I’m going to use all of it.”

“What? You’re going to use the whole song?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t think you should do that. I’m pretty sure it’ll just be noisy once you mix the other four songs.”

“That’s why I’m matching the four songs. First, I’m going to hold the place and adjust the volume.”

After playing with the track for several hours, he had a satisfied expression.

“The vocal track is finished... and we have to put in the violin.....”

“Violin? You’re finished already? You finished the four songs?”

“Yes. Can you set this master keyboard to the violin?”

The producer did not get to listen to the entirety of the song that he finished. Fixing one part and listening again to edit again... Jun Hyuk was done in one go without working like this.

“But Jun Hyuk. You don’t need to listen to the work you did?”

“Why? I saw everything with my eyes.”

“You know by looking at the soundwaves?”

“Yes. I think it’s much more comfortable being able to see the sound with my eyes. This

program is really good.”

The producers did not say more. They now thought that they would not need to have questions for Jun Hyuk any longer.

“You’re saying it’s like that. Um... oh, okay. You see these two dials? The one on top is the vibrato effect, and the bottom has the slide effect.”

“Okay. Then.”

Jun Hyuk pressed a few of the keys to test it out and laughed as though it was wondrous. It was because he was pressing the keyboard, but there was the sound of the violin.

“He he he. This is really fun.”

As he put both of his hands on the keyboard, he played the familiar Vivladi’s part 1 of Four Seasons Spring. After that, he played multiple classicals but did not play over 8 verses.

Soundtracks kept collecting on the monitor.

As he got used to using the master keyboard, his hands became faster. After the violin, he changed to the bass guitar and held the whole beat.

The producer who was listening next to him guessed that the beat was around 150BPM. It seemed a little slow, but there was no way to check because he could not listen to the whole song.

When Jun Hyuk finished the bass guitar, he stretched his arms and back and got up from his seat.

“Let’s start again after a break.”

“We haven’t done anything. You did everything yourself.”

“This is the real start.”

“What? Then what have you done ‘til now?”

“This is the combination for the bass sound. It’s the color tone that won’t be that noticeable. Now we need to work on the riff (key melody line), the drum that will point out the beat, and sound effects.”

They also passed out when they heard that everything he had done until now was just the background. The bigger problem was that Jun Hyuk had not once listened to the results of his hard work so far.

“Uh Jun Hyuk, we have to hear it first. I’m really curious too.”

“Ah, sorry. I thought you already knew because we worked on it together.”

“We’re not geniuses. We have no idea what any of this is just by looking at it. Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk’s first electronic. Half with curiosity and half with expectations, Yoon Jung Su, Jang Na Rae, and Kwak Hye Sung came to listen to Jun Hyuk’s first piece together.

Chapter 74

The four songs that Yoon Jung Su initially chose had similar flow and effect because they are all good to arrange as electronic dance music. Everyone listened carefully because they were curious to see how these four songs were completely combined and not sampled, even though they are similar.

The music flowed out once he pressed the play button. Everyone looked enchanted at the end of a song that did not even last 4 minutes. Except Yoon Jung Su.

Jun Hyuk's mixed song did not sound anything like a dance song, but more like a grand choir. Because of the measures from well-known classicals that were scattered well here and there, it could almost be mistaken for a song that one already knew.

"Jun Hyuk. I think it'll be hard even for a ballerina to dance to this song."

Yoon Jung Su offered his opinion. He meant that no one could dance along to a choir chorus that had an almost solemn sentiment to it.

"Exactly. This is just the drawing paper. I'm going to draw a dance on this."

"If you use this as a drawing paper, I think the traces of my song that you remake will disappear."

"It's a drawing paper. Drawing paper and paint. Paintings are completed with just these two, so it'll take up half of it."

Could he have smarts that he was born with? Or could it be that he becomes smart when music is involved? His descriptions were the best.

"Alright. I think it'll be easier to just listen to the completed song. Ha ha."

Yoon Jung Su came out of the studio and stopped by the cafe. He drank coffee alone as he thought about Jun Hyuk's music he had just listened to. He had held back his admiration in the studio because there had been so many people.

'Goodness. Fuga in a dance song.'

The main music fuga of the Baroque era is a complex machine with three parts (individual lines forming the melody and chords) as track, transition, and the length of notes stretched by two, reduced in half and before one part finishes, the next part plays in turn as stretta, changing in position, backing, et cetera.

Jun Hyuk had thought of the four original songs as parts and used the fuga technique to arrange them exquisitely.

It was surprising that he had thought to do this with four ordinary pop songs, but it's proper implementation deserved to be admired even more. The feeling that it was vaguely elaborate and exquisite was because the technique was so complex.

His thoughts on Jun Hyuk were completely overturned. Did a Jun Hyuk who had already reached this state need to go study abroad? When he had the skills to apply complex techniques just by listening to classical music?

Could it not be that learning theory for Jun Hyuk means that he will just be learning the designated names?

Yoon Jung Su drank the rest of his coffee in one gulp and stood up. Getting too involved was not good. It could be unnecessary for him to be so concerned with Jun Hyuk's future. No matter what path he chose, he was bound to be surrounded by people who are much more talented than Yoon Jung Su is.

When he returned to the studio after emptying his mind, he could not see Jang Na Rae. But Kwak Hye Sung was in the recording booth wearing headphones. It was obvious that he was nervous standing in front of the mic.

Kwak Hye Sung was nervous because he kept comparing himself to Jun Hyuk's music and Jang Na Rae's singing.

"What about Jang Na Rae? She's done practicing?"

"Yes. It's plenty. I think we can record the track tomorrow."

"How about Jun Hyuk?"

"He went into that room to paint on his drawing paper."

The sound engineer shook his head. Jun Hyuk's concentration surpassed that of most

professionals.

“How is Jang Na Rae’s song? Did it come out well?”

“Try listening to it later. It’s amazing.”

The sound engineer put this thumb up. This meant that Jang Na Rae had digested Jun Hyuk’s directing perfectly.

Yoon Jung Su spoke to Kwak Hye Sung who was nervous in the recording booth,

“Hye Sung, let’s do it lightly. It’s not a formal recording. As if you’re practicing. And don’t be too nervous, okay?”

Kwak Hye Sung’s song started, but the sound engineer was not really paying attention.

“Hey, aren’t you going to concentrate?”

“Oh, yes. Sorry.”

The sound engineer came to his senses once Yoon Jung Su hit the back of his head. There was no way for him to concentrate on Kwak Hye Sung’s boring song when he had just heard Jang Na Rae’s free and colorful music.

“This... This is a problem if Hye Sung comes on live broadcast after Jang Na Rae.....”

Yoon Jung Su responded to the sound engineer’s mumbling,

“What is it? Jang Na Rae was that good?”

“It’s no joke. Jang Na Rae is really something once she shows her potential. It’s like throwing a grenade where a bomb is going to fall if Hye Sung – no, anyone goes after Jang Na Rae.”

The sound engineer continued quickly,

“Scout her. I’m 100% sure someone else will take her once the 2nd stage goes on air.”

Kwak Hye Sung’s song ended as the two men were talking about something else.

“Uh, teacher. What did you think?”

“Huh? Oh... it’s okay. Should we take a break?”

Yoon Jung Su wanted to hurry up and hear Jang Na Rae’s song to see what the praise was all about.

He put on the headphones and listened to Jang Na Rae’s song. Yoon Jung Su forgot that Jun Hyuk had directed this song. Were Jang Na Rae’s vocals to this point? He could figure out why the sound engineer had put his thumb up.

It was a voice where one could feel that if there is only one moment’s opportunity, something hidden explodes.

Was Jang Na Rae 24 years old?

He had forgotten her age because a deep sound rang from her. Jun Hyuk had brought out this sound, just by telling her to sing calmly.

A few days passed with Kwak Hye Sung and Jang Na Rae practicing, and Jun Hyuk immersed in mixing.

Past 10pm, Jang Na Rae and Kwak Hye Sung went back to their dorm exhausted while Jun Hyuk had to be convinced to leave.

Once everyone left, the producer who had been working with Jun Hyuk brought Yoon Jung Su in front of the control box as though he had been waiting.

“Jung Su, this is what Jun Hyuk made... Listen to it.”

“He’s already finished?”

“No. According to Jun Hyuk, there’s still a lot left. He took a lot of sound effects in his MP3 sound library saying that he needs to listen to more.”

Yoon Jung Su felt bad for them in Jun Hyuk’s dedication,

“You guys must be struggling.”

“I’m telling you, we’re going crazy. No, first listen to this before you talk.”

After listening to a song short of 4 minutes, Yoon Jung Su could understand why the producers' faces were full of discontent.

"This... What is this? Goodness."

The two producers voiced their grievances as if they had been waiting for Yoon Jung Su's surprise.

"Exactly! We're going to go crazy. He says it'll take a while to complete it. What more can he put in from here?"

"This is what people these days call useless high quality. I'm pretty sure that if you turn this on at a club, people will stop and enjoy the music instead of dancing to it."

"Jung Su, you say something. And take the master keyboard away! This is like leaving a game console with a young child. I'm telling you, he's completely blown away by it."

Yoon Jung Su realized he had made a mistake. He felt like a teacher who had given the wrong homework. He needed to have told him to make music with just a simple beat and appropriate electronic sound. It was a mistake to throw unlimited ingredients at him.

He had created a drawing paper by mixing classical and his music with fuga. He had put L.A. metal that was popular in the 80s on that drawing paper. L.A metal is lighter than heavy metal and close to pop, so youths were enthusiastic. It is simple, but the strong guitar riff was everywhere.

It was enough until here. The part that astonished Yoon Jung Su came after he saw the part where fuga was left out.

The song that he was going to gift to Nam Seung Hee flowed as the main. It was not as the original song, but edited with a fast beat.

Yoon Jung Su yelled at the complaining producers once he came back to his senses,

"Hey! Isn't it like that when you're doing work? Why are you being like this? The basic is normally three or four days."

"Jung Su, what could be different with a topcoat here? It isn't a dance song anyway. Is he making a piece of work right now? They go to different producers the day after

tomorrow. What are we supposed to do when we need to finish everything by tomorrow? Tell him to do it appropriately.”

“Jung Su, you think about it too. This song is for a broadcast, not to listen to. The music is too complex. We know that it’s good because we’re listening to it with the best equipment in a recording studio. I can guarantee that the people watching via TV will not understand this music’s real taste.”

“Alright, I get it. I’ll talk to Jun Hyuk tomorrow. And once Na Rae and Hye Sung’s recordings are finished, hand it over to the broadcast station. They’ll have to prepare for the stage. Don’t forget.”

Chapter 75

Yoon Jung Su did not think it was so bad that he had something to teach Jun Hyuk the next day. He needed to teach Jun Hyuk the decisiveness to be able to choose jewels to toss from a chest full of jewels. It is the feeling of a director who has to take a movie film of a 3 hour running time that moves people to tears, but needs to cut it down to fit into 2 hours.



“The use?”

“Yeah. I told you in the beginning, right? The music needs to match the use too. It’s a little detrimental to the body but it’s simple, and fast food came out to make something to eat quickly. You have to make fast food, but you’ve made a French feast.”

“Then?”

“If you can’t take some of it out, we’ll have to end it around here. We need to finish recording today.”

It is a time when the music needs to fit the delivery. The quality of today’s popular music just passed a grade test to be produced, delivered, and consumed quickly to be thrown away.

Yoon Jung Su felt like he was Joseph II when he saw a surprised Jun Hyuk, and laughed.

The top opera, Mozart’s ‘Figaro’s Wedding,’ that dominated Austria was written on the command of the Holy Roman Empire’s Emperor Joseph II.

When Figaro’s Wedding premiered, Joseph II made the assessment, “Your music has too many notes.” When opera had a lot of dialogue before Mozart, there was a lot of work to handle as if it were theater dialogue. However, Mozart created the opera according to his wishes.

Since he heard an opera that was full of music as compared to the opera from before,

anyone could understand Joseph II's assessment that there were too many notes. However, it is said that Mozart replied, "There is not one unnecessary note in my music," though there is no way to confirm this.

Yoon Jung Su could not get himself to tell Jun Hyuk to take out notes as Joseph II had done, but he needed to tell him not to add more.

"What do you think? Can you just end it here?"

"No. It'll be better to just do it over again."

"What? Again?"

This time, Jun Hyuk laughed as he saw a surprised Yoon Jung Su. s

"It's okay. I'm not going to do it completely, but I'm going to take out a ton of it and make it really simply. I have to make fast food as you said. It'll take three or four hours."

A genius musician who is not stubborn. Had he been customized to the modern time where music is business and not art? Or could he have realized that he needs to concede at this time?

Yoon Jung Su was slightly taken aback that Jun Hyuk had accepted it so easily, but Jun Hyuk kept smiling as though it were nothing.

He was an increasingly complex child. Could it be that he has pride in his music? Or was it confidence that he could make any form of music take the best shape?



Jun Hyuk's electronic song for the second stage completely transformed to be full of simplicity. Unless one looked for it, it was hard to tell that it was Yoon Jung Su's song. He had made the perfect music combining a simple drum beat, electric guitar riff, and electronic sound effects.

It was dull however.

Everyone who had been listening to the song that Jun Hyuk had fixed in 5 hours had the same thought.

“This should be enough, right?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah. You did well.”

Jun Hyuk had made the music according to Yoon Jung Su’s instructions. It was perfectly made for broadcast.

It was dull, but it also felt like there was something missing.

“You took out the part you’ll be performing during the broadcast?”

“Yes, since we can’t just turn the music on for the stage.”

Yoon Jung Su saw Jun Hyuk who had made the music as though according to a client’s demands as a music director instead of a musician.

“Okay. Are you going to play the guitar on stage? Or the piano?”

“No. I’m going to play the keyboard so I can play multiple instrumental sounds.”

This is how Jun Hyuk’s second mission song was completed.

The three stayed in the studio until late at night to complete their songs so they could put them up on the track site as soon as the broadcast was over. When they finished working on their songs and returned to the dormitory, Yoon Jung Su quietly called Jang Na Rae over.

“Na Rae, listen to me carefully.”

“Yes, teacher.”

“I want to bring you into my agency.”

“.....”

Jang Na Rae just bowed her head when she heard something so unbelievable. It seemed as though she was trying to hold back tears.

How anxious she must have been. She was expecting to be eliminated during the first half of the finals that were soon to start. If no one wanted to take her by then, she

needed to go back to her daily life. This difficult yet grand world of entertainment would come to an end.

She had been thinking that her dream to make a living with music was coming to an end, but Yoon Jung Su had thrown her a rope of salvation.

“I think that if we work on your vocals, we can get them to an unreachable level.”

“Excuse me? Could it be that much?”

Yoon Jung Su’s high praises were more difficult to believe.

“Ha ha. You don’t believe my intuition?”

“Ah, that’s not what I meant.”

“It’s okay. It’s a joke. Anyway, I want to see you over time.”

“Over time?”

“Yeah. My intention is to make you a singer, not a celebrity. If I wanted to, I could get you on a couple variety programs and have you permanently placed on one. But I’m thinking of having you do music while building a fence with TV for 10 years. With a focus on album, OST, and theater concert. Instead of music ranking programs, only broadcasts like Sketchbook with a concert format.”

Yoon Jung Su meant for her to basically be a singer without a face.

“You might not be able to make much money until you take a sturdy seat in the music industry. And you won’t have fans following you around everywhere like girl groups do.”

For Jang Na Rae who dreamt of becoming a star, telling her to take the path of a musician inevitably made her hesitate.

“But in 10 years, Jang Na Rae will be a brand musician.”

It is difficult to tell someone in their 20s to be patient. Honor is important with age but in most cases, finding success quickly is the main goal for youths.

“It’s hard to succeed as a solo artist these days. You saw the girls who are the main vocals of their groups? Their vocal skills are amazing. It’s to the point where each of those girls could be solo artists.”

Since there were over millions of aspiring celebrities, the reality was that there were tons of girls who had everything including good looks and skills.

“I want to make you a singer with skills that overwhelm those girls. My goal is to make it so that they remake your songs and call you teacher instead of daring to call you sister or senior.”

“Teacher. I.....”

Yoon Jung Su stopped Jang Na Rae from speaking,

“Na Rae, hang on.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t respond now. I’m sure you need to think about it thoroughly and discuss it with your parents. Give me an answer when the broadcast is over.”

Jang Na Rae nodded her head in understanding.

“My guess is that during the broadcast, there will be other agencies contacting you to sign with them. It’ll be better for you to listen to them as well to make your decision.”

Jang Na Rae who had heard Yoon Jung Su’s proposition boarded the car going to the dormitory. Among the three, Jang Na Rae’s face was the brightest as she had put down a great worry.

The three people who had finished their second mission songs took each of their experiences and thoughts to gain more experiences and teachings from another producer.

Chapter 76

The producer in charge of Jun Hyuk's third mission song was Kim Jong Suk in his early 40s. He is a great producer who had created multiple musicians with individuality, who showed their own colors. He is also a famous bassist who played in two of Korea's representative rock bands.

He had initially turned down the opportunity to produce for the show, but suddenly changed his mind when he saw Jun Hyuk on broadcast. Kim Jong Suk wanted to participate no matter what and went to the broadcast station himself.

"I'm sorry, but it's all already decided. We can't change the producer now. We've even written up all of the contracts... Ugh! How good would it have been if you had agreed to do this in the first place? Why are you being like this now?"

Producer Kim Ki Sik was upset with Kim Jong Suk who was now coming in and demanding Jun Hyuk when he had turned down their offer in the beginning. However, Kim Jong Suk insisted stubbornly,

"I'm sorry, but there's this motivation now that I see Jun Hyuk. I have to see him."

"Did you by chance get approached by an agency? To connect them with Jun Hyuk?"

"Hey! Have you ever seen me meet with those guys? You know I don't even produce music for idol groups."

Kim Jong Suk, who was from a rock band, only worked with musicians who did not even make TV appearances often. Most of his producing was for debut albums of underground musicians.

If Kim Jong Suk agreed to produce for someone in the underground world, it meant that they were already halfway to success. It at least meant that they would not completely fail, and that their musicality had been recognized.

On the other hand, if Kim Jong Suk refused to produce, it was a sober assessment that they should give up music to go another path.

“Producer Kim. I’m not trying to take the job from a junior who has already finalized their contract. Just give me Jun Hyuk. You have the third mission, right? I’ll take responsibility for that one. I’m telling you I don’t even need money. I’ll do it for free. A donation of talent? Something like that?”

“What are your intentions?”

He was not a person to be so rashly persistent. There had to be a reason why he was so insistent.

“Producer Kim. I’ll make Jun Hyuk sing on stage. It’s still a no?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik was not sure if he had heard correctly for a moment. He would make Jun Hyuk sing?

“Did you just say that you would make him sing?”

“That’s right. I’m doing this because I want to hear him sing. The tone of his voice isn’t bad. And I think I can guess why he isn’t singing... Leave it to me.”

“You’ll really make him sing?”

Kim Jong Suk’s voice grew louder at Producer Kim’s sudden interest,

“Instead, I heard that the 3rd mission theme is idol group songs, but change that. Do that in the 4th round. I heard the 3rd round is his last anyway.”

“If you can make Jun Hyuk sing... And if he sings well, he could push to the win.”

“That’s a little... I can’t promise that he’ll sing well. But I’ll make sure he sings. So what do you want to do? Will you leave him to me?”

“Before that... how are you going to make him sing? If I think what you’re thinking is possible, we’ll do as you say.”

“I’m going to trust his sensibility.”

“Sensibility?”

Since he was born with a talent in music, it is definite that he is rich in sensibility. Kim

Jong Suk ensured Producer Kim Ki Sik that Jun Hyuk would sing if his emotions were stimulated.

“I got some information from Hyung Joong and Jung Su. Right now, that kid is just an architect who’s remodeling other people’s songs. He’s readily pulling everything apart and putting it back together according to a blueprint.”

Until now, Jun Hyuk had been focused on using the ingredients he was given to create the best music. There was no choice but to use other people’s songs because it is a broadcast, but he never showed his own story.

“This kid has never expressed himself. According to Hyung Joong, he has mountains of compositions at home, but I can guarantee that he doesn’t express himself in any of those.”

“How do you know that?”

“When normal guys like us make music, we use our emotions, feelings, and thoughts because we have nowhere else to get the music from. With someone like Jun Hyuk, he can make music with even the slightest external stimulation. I’m pretty sure he’ll make music even by listening to the sound of a subway.”

“You talk like you know Jun Hyuk really well when you’ve never met him.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik looked at Kim Jong Suk who was speaking more and more nonsense as if he could not believe him.

“Because I’ve met a lot of similar geniuses.”

Kim Jong Suk worked with underground young and witty musicians who made music with their own color. There was even a person who saw two cockroaches in a basement practice room and said that they looked like a couple playing ‘catch me if you can’ on the beach. Though they are not as outstanding as Jun Hyuk, the underground is full of people who have their own talents.

“So what’s the conclusion? What method will it take to make Jun Hyuk sing?”

“I want to make Jun Hyuk face himself. Then he’ll want to ‘speak’ since there are things that are hard to express with just a melody.”

“What in the world is Jun Hyuk’s hidden appearance that you’re being like this?”

“You’re asking because you don’t know?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik thought for a moment and opened his eyes widely,

“Surely?”

“Yeah. What else could there be?”

Kim Ki Sik put his life on the line for viewer ratings and did all sorts of things, but he just realized that artists do even more than that to create one piece of work.

“It’s too dangerous. If you rub his wounds, we don’t know what that brat will do. We’re dead if he gives everything up and runs away.”

Kim Jong Suk looked at Producer Kim Ki Sik pathetically,

“That’s why you’re just a producer for a music program. He won’t run away. What musician would run away when he’s found the best subject matter for music?”

Chapter 77

Producer Kim Ki Sik could not shake his worries even while he was looking at a Kim Jong Suk full of assurance.

“Alright. Let’s say that’s true. But you know his skill is no joke, right? What if he decides to express himself with his music instead of singing?”

“Then we’re back to square one, no? If he won’t sing, we’ll end up with a really great instrumental. What are you so scared of? There’s nothing for you to lose anyway.”

Of course there was nothing to lose as long as he got on stage. Kim Jong Suk pushed again when he saw Kim Ki Sik worrying again. He could just cling to Kim Ki Sik’s weakness.

“Think about it. I heard the first stage is piano and the second is mixing? What are you going to do for the third? Is there anything other than the guitar? But didn’t you already use the guitar already by inserting it in the previews and broadcast? All that’s left is singing. Are you going to show a drum instrumental?”

Producer Kim was not forgetting this. He wanted to make Jun Hyuk dance for the 3rd stage if he could. They had milked him too much. They needed to show a new side of him now.

If he were to sing during the 3rd round and his song was good, they would have nothing to worry about after that. There would be a huge reversal and he would automatically win.

They might record the highest viewer ratings like they did in season 2.

“Hey! If I think I’m going to fail, I’ll say it completely honestly. Then you can redo it. What’s there to worry about when Jun Hyuk can make a song within a day or two?”

“Fine. But if there’s even the slightest problem, you need to tell me right away. Don’t hang on to him tight and have him not show up for the performance.”

“Okay. Don’t worry. Also, don’t put a camera on us.”

“That’s a little.....”

“It’s the 3rd stage anyway. There are a lot of participants, so use the behind the scenes of other people. Just think about it. If it were you, would you want a camera stuck to you when you’re trying to focus?”

The 3rd stage would be a contest between 8 people. Since it is a live broadcast, they would not have to put out a lot of what the VJs shot.

Producer Kim Ki Sik decided to take a big risk. Is a live broadcast itself not a risk?

“Do you know who I am?”

“Yes, I heard about you.”

“Then you didn’t know before?”

“No. I didn’t know at first, but knew once I heard the name of the band. I heard that you played the bass in your rock band? I’ve heard that band’s album before.”

“Really? It’s an honor. Yoon Jung Su was complaining that you hadn’t heard his songs before. Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk did not know why he had been assigned to new producer alone. However, he felt at ease thinking that he would spend the next week with the bassist of the two albums he had listened to. Just like the music in the album he heard, Kim Jong Suk seemed to be serene.

“How was my bass? Was it okay?”

“It was mild for a rock band’s bassist, but too good for a pop bassist?”

“What? Ha ha. This... This is complete criticism.”

“No, it’s not. I meant that it is good. A bass that is calm and stable. Since you have an excellent sense of rhythm, you held the center of a progressive band.”

He did not write songs while he was in the band. The lead vocalist and guitarist made all of the songs in the album. However, Kim Jong Suk had been in charge of producing while working on their albums.

Saying that he is stable meant that Jun Hyuk had him figured out exactly.

“Of course. Your ear is just as I heard.”

“But what is this mission song?”

“That? You don’t have to worry about it. It’ll be done in a day. This time, don’t use an acoustic or electric guitar, and go for a calm performance with a classic guitar. You’ve lost interest anyway, right?”

“Excuse me?”

“Since it’s the first live stage in 10 days, you want to quit everything and go home. Nothing is fun anymore. Right?”

Jun Hyuk smiled as he saw Kim Jong Suk who was laughing while looking at Jun Hyuk. He was different from the other two producers. He did not seem as though he cared about the mission song and it seemed like he was looking at him like a fun plaything.

“Then can I quit? Should I just go home like this?”

“This kid... You think it would be okay? You have to keep your promise at least.”

It was obvious that he had lost interest. He would need to get back interest first. Until he wanted to sing.

“But if the mission song can be completed in one day, what do we do for a week?”

“What can we do? You can hang out with me.”

“Excuse me? What do we do while we hang out?”

“First, I want a reassessment of my bass guitar skills. I’ll play the bass, you on the drum? Or guitar?”

Jun Hyuk smiled brightly as he spoke,

“The piano is more me.”

They began to play around like this.

His days with Kim Jong Suk continued like the first day as if they were playing around. Kim Jong Suk took Jun Hyuk to Hongdae everyday. Among the countless buildings in Hongdae, there were a lot with band practice rooms in the basements.

Though they craved stardom, there were a lot of people who had to give up their dreams early on because they either did not have the talent, or they were far from the public taste.

The band that Kim Jong Suk met were skilled and had already released critically acclaimed debut albums. But subcultures were hungry. Much less a record, they did not have a track that sold well and there was no place that offered to promote their concert. They were just skilled underground musicians. They toured the Hongdae clubs and lived as they performed.

Jun Hyuk hung out and performed with these people in these drab basements. It was music that he had only listened to because he did not have anyone to perform it with. Though they were small and dirty basements, he was performing with other people.

There were times when the bands assisted Jun Hyuk's music, and there were times when he supported the bands. As they filled the basements with music, Jun Hyuk's frustration was released.

"Teacher, we're not going to Hongdae today?"

"No. We're not going to go today."

Kim Jong Suk answered nonchalantly and watched Jun Hyuk's expression. His face was full of regret. The taste of performing together with each of their parts. Jun Hyuk had learned the taste of playing in a band.

"You like bands?"

"Yes, of course."

"Aren't you majoring on the classical side? I thought you liked classical more than band music."

"Whether it's a trio, quartet, or orchestra, they're all bands. The instruments they play are just different and an orchestra is just a band with a ton of people. Orchestras are just more fun because they need to match a huge number of instruments. Even bands

that have four members practice a lot to play one song. It's all the same thing."

Kim Jong Suk thought that he might be able to succeed. He was not bound to the genre, but had fallen into music itself. The time was coming for him for 'speak' for the perfect music. If that path was unveiled, he would sing.

"Someone is going to come looking for us today. They're kids I'm trying to make albums for, but they're fun. I'm pretty sure you'll like them too."

Jun Hyuk's curiosity was fulfilled before an hour passed. The people who came to the studio were three men in their late 20s with heads shaved so it looked as if they were criminals who had just been released from prison.

"Say hi. They're complete punks. Their band name is Threesome Bank Robbery. You guys know who this kid is, right?"

When Kim Jong Suk introduced Jun Hyuk, the three men started cheering.

"Wow – he's the biggest star right now. It's an honor."

"I saw the videos online. There's a rumor in the industry that you're the best one-man band."

The threesome surrounded Jun Hyuk and cheered like high school fan girls.

They looked like criminals, but Jun Hyuk was surprised that they were just chatterboxes.

"There, do well since this is a person who can brazenly assess your music."

"What is this? If the assessment isn't good, we don't get an album?"

"Of course. This kid's ear isn't common. You guys are dead."

Guitar, bass, drum – the minimal configuration of a band. Their music was a repetition of a minimal chord simple rhythm. There are a lot of alternative bands that use punk as their base.

It was easy to tell that Threesome Bank Robbery's music had used punk as the base to create their sound.

While Jun Hyuk heard the three songs they performed consecutively, he kept bursting out in laughter. It was music full of the ‘fun’ that Kim Jong Suk had spoken about.

It could not be said that each of their performing skills were outstanding. It was not that the style of the song overwhelmed the outstanding skill, but the performance skills were lacking. Their songs showed simplicity by using just three chords.

Jun Hyuk was laughing at the lyrics. Honestly, there was nothing to call lyrics. It was just a chanting and chorus that could be seen in folk songs.

In a song titled ‘Maponaru,’ all of the lyrics were, ‘eogiyecha, aeheara diya, row the oar’.

Kim Jong Suk spoke as he saw Jun Hyuk laugh continuously.

“What do you think? It’s fun, right?”

“Yes. There are a lot of hidden experts in the world.”

“Expert? Those kids are experts?”

Chapter 78

Kim Jong Suk had never thought of the threesome as experts. He just thought that they were people with the ability to make fun and good music.

“Yes. Their performance skills are lacking and the song is simple, but they overcome that by putting in a few lyrics. And it’s exciting. This won’t be something just anyone can do. That’s what a talent is.”

“What do you think their point is?”

“The ability to release lyrics like eogiyeocha with thick voices at the exact timing. It’s exquisite.”

The threesome smiled widely at Jun Hyuk’s elation.

“Wow! We received praise from a genius. He he.”

“Is there something for you to fix in our songs?”

The members were happy at Jun Hyuk’s words and full of expectation.

“There’s a lot. It’ll be good if we pull everything apart to fix... But then it’s riding on your performance skills and you won’t be able to perform, so you should just leave it the way it is.”

“Such brutal assessment without hesitation.”

The three men did not seem to regard Jun Hyuk’s evaluation very much. They just thought that this was also something very fun.

“No. It’s not brutal... It’s because a completely different music will result if I fix it. There’s a band’s color, and no one should touch it.”

“Jun Hyuk, what do you think about performing with them? So they can see the floor of their skills.”

Kim Jong Suk, who wanted to see something more fun, kept pushing Jun Hyuk, but he kept shaking his head.

“No. What more could you need when it’s good now? It’s perfect.”

As the Threesome Bank Robbery left the studio, Kim Jong Suk spoke as though he had been waiting,

“Okay, let’s be honest since it’s just us. What did you think?”

“It’s really good. The problem is what will happen from now on.”

“From now on? Why?”

“It hasn’t been long since those three members started music, right? I could tell by their performance skills.”

“Yeah. It’s been... 2 years? Around there.”

“Their skills will keep improving now... and they’ll start to dislike the simple songs now. Then they’ll change it to music that’s a little more colorful, then they’ll become similar other skilled bands and be compared... and that’s how they’ll fail, I guess.”

Their novelty was their weapon, but if that were to disappear in a musician. It meant that they could have a long run if they maintained their novelty with a simple performance.

Kim Jong Suk slightly showed why he showed the threesome’s performance,

“There aren’t very many lyrics, but what do you think?”

“That was really impressive. When they said eogiyeocha is something that can’t be expressed with an instrument.”

Jun Hyuk did not hide his admiration and spoke.

“Why do you think that?”

“I thought about what it could be switched with while I was listening, but I couldn’t think of anything.”

He had tried to remember a sound effect in the sound library that he had listened to in Yoon Jung Su's studio, but was unable to think of anything.

If Jun Hyuk had realized even a little that the human voice could not be replaced with any instrument, Kim Jong Suk had reached today's goal.

'Should I slowly lower the bait?'

Kim Jong Suk handed over a CD. A title was written on the CD in marker.

"Jun Hyuk, do you know this song?"

"No."

It said, 'Must Erase You in this Sadness' on the CD.

"It's a song that was in Lee Hyun Woo's first album from 1991... It wasn't paid too much attention to back then, but became popular once Lee So Ra sang it on I am a Singer."

Lee Hyun Woo's 1st album was a hit with the revolutionary dance song 'Dream'.

"I recommend that you remake Lee So Ra's version. Her version only has a piano accompaniment. Lee So Ra is... she has the best voice so... I was thinking what if you express Lee So Ra's voice with a classic guitar. Is it possible?"

"Then I'll listen to the song first."

"No. This is better to watch as a video. I asked the broadcast station for it. Watch it."

Jun Hyuk put the CD in the computer and started to watch the 4-minute video.

The video was from the special Australian concert of 'I Am a Singer'. She came out into the amphitheater with a shaved head and black clothing like a priest and sang quietly.

It was a song that Lee So Ra had to sing while reading off of a score because they had changed her song 4 hours before the performance, and she did not have the time to memorize them. She had been in 7th place at the time but with this song, she rose to 1st place with 48% of the viewer votes.

The only accompaniment was a sweet electric piano that was not elaborate or grand.

Jun Hyuk just stared blankly at the screen. As he had only listened to her early albums, he was shocked by how thin she had gotten and by her shaved head. She also must not have been feeling well on the day of the recording, because she looked sickly. She looked like a woman who had just gone through a breakup.....

Lee So Ra's voice came as more of a shock than her weak appearance did. Strictly speaking, the lyrics she sang touched Jun Hyuk's heart.

As it was the first time he was crying while listening to pop music, he did not even have the thought to wipe his tears. It seemed he had even forgotten that Kim Jong Suk was next to him.

Kim Jong Suk watched Jun Hyuk and quietly went outside. He needed to leave him for at least an hour for him to wipe his tears and calm down. Teenage boys going through puberty did not like to show other people their tears. As soon as he came outside, Kim Jong Suk clenched both of his fists.

It was a success.

He was not crying because the music is good or because is impressed by Lee So Ra's voice since he said that he had already listened to many of her songs before. There was no doubt that he was crying because of the video's somber atmosphere and lyrics.

This was enough. The key now was to see if the emotions that Jun Hyuk was feeling could be expressed with instruments. If they could be expressed with instruments, he would fail in his objective. But if it could not... he would be able to make Jun Hyuk sing. Jackpot.

Chapter 79

Kim Jong Suk killed enough time in a coffee shop so Jun Hyuk could dry his tears before he went back to the studio. In the studio, Jun Hyuk was sitting in front of an electric piano and playing a song that he had never heard before.

After listening to a few verses, he was most curious as to whether or not Jun Hyuk was recording the music. It was a beautiful song. He thought that the song would be very sad because Jun Hyuk had just been crying, but it was so beautiful it felt like ice cream melting.

It made him forget that this was a recording studio full of the smell of cigarettes. Etude Op. 10, No. 3 which Chopin composed at age 22 was so beautiful that it did not fall behind 'Song of Farewell'.

When the 5 minute piano performance ended, it was Kim Jong Suk's turn to cry. They were tears of pure emotion, not of sadness.

'Damn. Did I fail?'

This is the thought he had even as he was crying. He should have been crying tears of sadness after Lee So Ra's song, but it seems the result had been shifted. How could he be playing the piano in happiness and not sadness?

Kim Jong Suk wiped his tears and went toward Jun Hyuk,

"Wow- that's great. What's this song?"

"Oh, teacher. When did you get here?"

All traces of tears were gone from Jun Hyuk's face and he looked brighter than usual.

"Just now. What is this piano?"

"I thought of it just now while listening to Lee So Ra."

"What were you thinking about that you were able to create such a beautiful song?"

“Um... It’s difficult to say exactly but... refreshed?”

Jun Hyuk blinked for a moment as he thought and spoke easily.

“You felt refreshed?”

Had he failed in his song selection? How could it be? He had paid attention to the meaning of the lyrics and each word to choose the song. Even the singer who would be able to deliver the emotion best. He had even prepared the video because it was lacking with just the melody and lyrics alone. But he is refreshed? He had been able to tell from Jun Hyuk’s piano. The theme was surely a parting, but there was happiness in it unlike with Chopin.

He felt like he needed to see how Jun Hyuk was feeling a little more in order to take the next plan of action, whether it was choosing another song.

“Yes. It feels like something has been unblocked.”

‘I’m about to go crazy. He feels refreshed like something was unblocked?’

Jun Hyuk saw Kim Jong Suk’s uncomfortable expression and spoke,

“Why are you like that? Was the piano not good?”

“Of course not. It was great. It didn’t fall behind Chopin. Oh right, did you record this?”

“No. I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“Why? This great song? Oh right, you remember all of it?”

“I do remember it but... I’m going to forget it. So it’s refreshing.”

He is going to forget it. Did he mean that he was going to let go of everything, whatever it was that he felt while listening to Lee So Ra’s song?

“If the 3rd mission song were one of your choice, it would have been good if you could show this piano. What a waste.”

“It’s okay. Also, teacher. Is Lee So Ra’s song my mission song?”

“Huh? Yeah. That’s what I was thinking... What do you think? Should we change it?”

“No. I like it. I’ll try changing this song to the guitar.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk took his guitar and went into the practice room, Kim Jong Suk quickly grabbed a pen and tried to write the song Jun Hyuk’s just played on a score.

However, Kim Jong Suk is not Mozart or a genius. All he had left was the feeling that it was beautiful and soft like ice cream. After he wrote down a couple bars of the piano melody, he could not remember any more and threw the pen.

Kim Jong Suk was going crazy at the thought of it being wasted. How many songs had disappeared in this way? Jun Hyuk will have played the piano or guitar to express the moment’s mood. He has more than enough talent to show feelings and moods with music.

He kept thinking if there was a way to gather all of these songs that are to disappear from now on. There is no way to hide a producer’s ambition.



Jun Hyuk was frustrated. He could not figure out why the guitar arrangement for a song of just 4 minutes was taking so long.

Usually, he could hear a song once and think of the arrangement right away. All he had to do was to play that. Arranging is the easiest aspect of music for him.

Even now, he thought up something in a wink. But when he played it on the guitar, it was awkward and it fell short of his liking. It was the same when he played it on the piano.

Kim Jong Suk listened from outside the practice room. When the guitar music first came out, he thought that he had failed in his goal to make Jun Hyuk sing.

He had heard a perfect guitar instrumental. Just as he was thinking that he needed to hurry up and think of another song, he heard another version of the guitar instrumental.

There were a few versions and eventually, Jun Hyuk switched to the piano. It was the

same on the piano. After a few versions of the piano instrumental, there was a bang – sound.

Two hands hitting the keyboard roughly. The expression that musicians all around the world had in common. The sound that made it easiest to tell when something was not going well.

‘Of course. How could expressing oneself be easy?’

Kim Jong Suk smiled without knowing it. Jun Hyuk had met the challenge most difficult for geniuses. He must look deeply at himself instead of avoiding it as he had done until now in order for the music he wanted to come out.

‘What a headache. There’s no time.’

The problem is time. He had dragged Jun Hyuk all the way here and thought that he might be able to get what he wanted. But the live broadcast was nearing.

Jo Hyung Joong had called a few times since the morning.

[Jong Suk. Jun Hyuk needs to go into rehearsal all day tomorrow. An orchestra is coming, so he can’t miss it. Drop him off at his dorm early today and tell him to rest well.]

Jo Hyung Joong was reminding him that he was to be in charge of Jun Hyuk for the day tomorrow.

The day after tomorrow, the production team would be taking him for everyone’s 1st live stage. If the music did not come out today, the 2nd stage would end and they would only have one week to prepare for the 3rd.

During that one week, his schedule would be full of events and other items.....

Kim Jong Suk called Jun Hyuk out of the practice room.

“Why? It’s not going well?”

“A little. I don’t know why I don’t like it this time.”

Jun Hyuk who still did not know the reason, shook his head.

“Jun Hyuk. When I saw the broadcast, you said you think of the human voice as an imperfect instrument?”

“Yes. To an extent.”

“Why?”

“Even someone who is considered the ultimate vocalist cannot sing without an accompaniment.”

“Could there be a perfect instrument? We’re using them appropriately from time to time. Don’t you think so?”

“Yes. I think that to an extent. Are you doing this because I won’t sing?”

“Yeah. I’m really curious about that. You’re vocal tone isn’t bad. But why don’t you sing?”

“I don’t dislike it because the human voice is imperfect. It’s the same as my not being able to play the piano. There are tons of people who are good at singing, so there’s really no reason for me to do it.”

“But I’m sure there have been times when you wanted to sing with your voice too? Pianists, violinists, and even conductors have gone to the karaoke to sing.”

“Oy, of course I’ve done that before too. But when I sang, it doesn’t sound very good. I ruin the song and you can’t call what I do in karaoke, music. I’m just singing for fun.”

He could imagine it. He could imagine Jun Hyuk turning the music on loudly in an empty cafe basement and singing along to the songs he likes. Could there be a person who works in the recording studio who has not done this? Kim Jong Suk’s heart beat. That’s right. He’s a person too, so there is no way he has not sung before.

“Really? Whose song do you sing?”

“It’s different every time. I usually sing along to the blues and rock since I can’t do opera arias or jazz at all.”

“How about our pop music?”

“He he. Not really... They’re all talking about men and women.....”

It was indeed an issue of the lyrics. They were hard to sympathize with. With a foreign song, the melody prevailed because he did not know the meaning of the lyrics at all. That is why he could sing them.

“Jun Hyuk. There’s a saying. A letter cannot contain all words and words cannot contain all emotions. That’s why music exists. It exists in order to fully capture inexpressible feelings...”

“Oh! That’s really cool. Who said that?”

“I don’t know. I just heard it somewhere too. He he.”

As Jun Hyuk showed interest, Kim Jong Suk continued speaking,

“I think this is saying that music is the best. I think it means that words are the best in delivering feelings, but it becomes perfect when music is added.”

Jun Hyuk listened carefully to Kim Jong Suk so as not to miss a word.

“And there’s a limitation to music. There are traps too.”

“Traps?”

“Yeah. Music captures emotions, but it’s difficult to capture a narrative.”

“Narrative? No, it can capture that plenty. Sonatas which are the majority of classical are narratives...”

“Exactly. The music becomes longer in order to capture the narrative, no? Tell me if there’s a short 5 minute song that contains a narrative.”

Jun Hyuk did not have an answer to the sudden question. Sonata No. 3 and No. 4 compositions. They were all long.

“The only way to capture a narrative in 5 minutes is by speech.”

“The voice is an imperfect instrument, but speech is the best tool to deliver a narrative. That’s why since long ago, narratives have been delivered by poems and stories.

Singing means that you're using this good tool, 'speech,' not using your voice. Vocals are a problem for later."

Jun Hyuk had a vague feeling that singing is just another way of speaking.

"If arranging Lee So Ra's song is difficult, don't restrict yourself too much and broaden your horizons. Don't think about it as singing but as 'speech.'"

Up to here was everything Kim Jong Suk could do. Now he needed to proceed with the live stage and once the 2nd stage was over, they would meet to prepare for the 3rd round.

'Producer Kim is going to lose his cool.'

He had talked big, but had not been able to succeed. However, there was still the slightest chance left.

Kim Jong Suk did not forget Jo Hyung Joong's urging to send Jun Hyuk back to the dorm early. He did not forget his last message either.

"Jun Hyuk, I heard tomorrow is the combined rehearsal? Completely empty your mind. Once the 2nd round is over, you have a week's time. Think about this again then."

Kim Jong Suk prayed to himself that Jun Hyuk would decide to sing.

Chapter 80

“I had a feeling when you didn’t pick up the phone yesterday. Forget recording, isn’t it over if you haven’t even been able to arrange the song yet?”

Producer Kim Ki Sik was frowning at a Kim Jong Suk who had run to the broadcast station himself.

“That’s not it. We haven’t been able to arrange the song yet because it can’t be expressed as an instrumental. He needs to sing.”

“Jong Suk. Why is Jun Hyuk being like that with ‘Must Erase You in this Sadness’? It’s not even very unique.”

“The lyrics aren’t about breaking up, but about the moment two people turn from each other after they break up.”

When Kim Jong Suk thought of the song, he recalled a scene as though from a movie.

“I showed him the version that Lee So Ra sang on purpose. If you fit it all together well, the picture becomes clear.”

No matter how Producer Kim Ki Sik tried to fit the pieces together, a special picture did not appear.

Kim Jong Suk began to go through the details for Producer Kim Ki Sik who could not put the pieces together.

Leaning on a cold wall

Watching a dawn coming brighter.

“This means she wandered until dawn after breaking up since couples don’t meet at dawn to break up. Whether they met at night or at dinner, she wasn’t able to brush it off and go back home. It was that difficult.”

Now I must leave your side.

Though I might regret leaving your side

It's because I love you.

"She truly loved him, but decided that breaking up is better for the other person. Since the singer is Lee So Ra, this was the woman's decision. And the reason why I didn't let him listen to the version by Lee Hyun Woo."

Producer Kim Ki Sik started to listen to Kim Jong Suk's interpretation with interest.

I love you but I can't help but leave.

This moment is so hard.

"I'm sure it means that breaking up is great suffering for the woman as well?"

Though I only cause you pain

You'll be able to understand me one day.

"This is important. 'You'll be able to understand me one day'. There will inevitably be a day when he understands the reason why they broke up, the reason why this was the only choice. This is the most important message to deliver to Jun Hyuk."

Goodbye, my love

"It's not [my former love], but [my love]. She's not saying that her love faded, but is confessing that she still loves him. What do you think?"

"So why are you saying that this makes Jun Hyuk look back at himself? What's the relation to the lyrics?"

A scene where a man and woman who are in love, break up. What is he saying is special? Producer Kim Ki Sik could not understand Kim Jong Suk's interpretation yet.

Kim Jong Suk looked at Producer Kim pathetically,

"What is it? You still don't know? Your imagination is too short for a producer of a music program."

“Jong Suk!”

“Think about it carefully. The woman is Jun Hyuk’s biological mother. The man is Jun Hyuk himself.”

“Ah.....!”

Kim Ki Sik yelled as he had just understood it.

These lyrics were the story of the day that Jun Hyuk was abandoned.

After leaving a baby at the door of an orphanage, a woman who cannot leave and leans on a wall in an alley. That woman’s confession.

“Jun Hyuk cried hard when he first heard this song. But after crying for a while, he expressed the joy of farewells on the piano.”

“Joy?”

“Yeah. He thought that his mother did this for him. It was because she loves him and not because he was bothersome or because she did not love him. For him. That’s why he was happy. Of course, we don’t know if this is true or not. Jun Hyuk’s mother who abandoned him is the only person who can know, but Jun Hyuk thought the same way as the lyrics.”

Emotions came through the listener. The composer melted his intentions into a song and the audience melted their emotions out.

“If he had listened to Lee So Ra’s song and freely gushed his feelings, he wouldn’t have needed to sing. He can express himself on the piano and guitar. That’s why he was able to create the piano song. But he said that he would forget it. He’s brushing it off so he doesn’t have to think about it twice.”

Jun Hyuk’s on-the-spot piano. That was the song that Jun Hyuk had interpreted from Lee So Ra.

“But he needs to arrange the song for the mission. He needs to do it from his mother’s position and not by his emotions. He can change the melody. He’s only controlled rhythm and inserted parts, so he can’t express lyrics. That’s why Jun Hyuk hasn’t been able to finish the arrangement yet.”

It seemed cruel. Kim Ki Sik is the one who had thought that it was necessary to rub salt in his wounds. However, as Kim Jong Suk had assured, Jun Hyuk did not run away or quit. He was looking back at himself.

“Producer Kim. Send him back to me once the 2nd stage is over. Something will come out after 2 weeks. Can you wait a little longer?”

“What can I do when you’ve pushed me into another corner? I’ll have to wait, won’t I? Just make it so he isn’t absent for the live stage. If you can’t get him to sing, just make sure he has a great instrumental.”

Singing could wait just a bit. Now it was time for the orchestra.

Chapter 81

Two days before the first broadcast of the finals, Jo Hyung Joong and Jun Hyuk met with Fine Philharmonic and its conductor. They met on the stage where the 12 participants would appear with distinctly different and stylish looks compared to the preliminaries.

The music director and staff were also there to participate in the sound check for the orchestra's live stage. A great sound needed to grace the 1st live stage of the finals.

"Hello, Teacher Jo. I am Hwang Suk Min."

"Ah, it's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Jo Hyung Joong."

Conductor Hwang Suk Min shook everyone's hand lightly and turned to Jun Hyuk,

"I guess you're the one who said all of those bitter words."

Hwang Suk Min held Jun Hyuk's hand firmly,

"Our expectations are great today. We've practiced a bit as well. Let's see what kind of music comes from your piano and us."

The orchestra's tuning began and Hwang Suk Min who had finished his preparations spoke to Jun Hyuk,

"So, we need to try it out? See what kind of sound results."

The conductor's somewhat provocative words. And with the pressure of the 60 performers before their eyes, Jun Hyuk felt as though his head had been wiped blank.

"What are you doing? You have to sit in front of the piano."

Jun Hyuk who had been standing awkwardly, took a deep breath and faced the piano at Hwang Suk Min's sound.

There were 88 keys that he had seen countless times. It was a keyboard that he had

played without anxiety or hesitation until now. But now, his fingertips shook at Conductor Hwang Suk Min's gaze, who was asking if he was ready to perform with everyone.

It was the first orchestra he was meeting after he had started to earnestly listen to music and learn to play instruments. Jun Hyuk had always imagined playing with an orchestra while playing alone. He had not imagined that the provocative gazes of 60 performers and their conductor would be this heavy.

When Hwang Suk Min confirmed that Jun Hyuk had put his hands on the piano, he lifted his baton.

He winked to send a signal to Jun Hyuk and the baton sliced downwards through the air. Jun Hyuk could hear the intense melody of the stringed instruments. After just two verses ended, the music stopped.

"Jun Hyuk, don't be nervous. Take a deep breath....."

The performance had stopped because Jun Hyuk had lost the timing to start playing the piano. He could not press one key and just looked at his shaking hands.

His face became hot. He had insulted them saying that they could not read scores and could not concentrate, but he was the one who could not play the piano because of his shaking hands.

"I see this is our pianist's first time performing with an orchestra. What do you think about playing by yourself first? All we've heard is a recorded file of our pianist's performance. You might have something to criticize with us as well. Ha ha."

"Then... Then I'll try playing by myself and we can try again."

"Okay. Take your time. We can rehearse over 100 times. It's a big problem if we make a mistake like this on stage. I heard it's a live broadcast? That means it's a concert."

Jun Hyuk took a deep breath and put his hands on the piano again. The 5 minutes performance ended, but the conductor did not show a satisfied expression.

"Our pianist has withered. I thought it's the theme of a robot animation? A robot isn't a newlywed or anything. I'm pretty sure it'll be too calm."

Jun Hyuk could not tell if Hwang Suk Min was assessing him or being sarcastic, but he became ardent at his laughter. Thanks to this, he released a lot of tension and found the will to fight back.

“There, then let’s try it for real.”

Hwang Suk Min smiled slightly at Jun Hyuk’s challenging tone.

He brought down his baton. Jun Hyuk was only looking at the end of the baton as it matched the sound of the stringed instruments, and put his fingers on the keyboard. They started to play together.

When the introduction ended and the 1st verse started, the piano’s melody began to overwhelm the stringed instruments. Not the climax, but the lyrical part.

Dolce!

It was a part that had to continue sweetly and softly. The explosion was still far away. However, this gentle piano was hitting down on the stringed instruments like a hammer.

The timing was perfect and there were no mistakes, but the pressure in the violin bows was reduced. Only 20 seconds had passed.

When Hwang Suk Min heard the sound of the strings fading, he used all of his strength to save it. But the violin and viola did not have the strength to withstand the power of the piano.

If they caved before the climax, the balance would collapse when the winds entered.

The conductor grit his teeth and tried to encourage them, but they eventually all fell after being dragged along by the piano. By the time the winds entered, the orchestra parts had become a mess and Hwang Suk Min stopped his baton.

Jun Hyuk also stopped playing the piano. Since one hand had stopped, it was awkward to play by himself.

“Oy, what an embarrassment. After performing in front of people who use art for vanity, we’ve met our match today.”

Hwang Suk Min laughed as he scratched his back with the baton.

Fine Philharmonics was made up of performers of similar standards, and they sold their tickets to an audience also of a similar standard. Half of those are invitations.

It was hard to say that the people who came for them had an affinity for classical, no for music. They wanted to wear the clothes of dignity from classical music, and filled their vanity by enjoying it. That is why their ticket prices had been decided on an amount that was just fit for these people.

The repertoire was monotonous. They could not get past Beethoven, Mozart, Bach. They became uncomfortable when they went over to Schumann, Toscanini, Mahler. Their audience was full of people who could not appreciate music that they were not used to.

Since they had rarely performed in front of an audience with sharp ears, the conductor and performers all became overwhelmed and faded away.

"I was told that you started playing the piano 2 years ago."

"Yes, that's right."

"Self-educated?"

"Well... Almost."

The 60 performers' jaws dropped when they heard that he was self-educated, but Hwang Suk Min lightly nodded his head as though he had been expecting it.

"You have an overflowing energy because you're wild and haven't been tamed. We're going to have a bit of a hard time today."

Hwang Suk Min who had been scratching his head with the baton spoke in words that may or may not have been in jest.

"I provoked you for no reason. I shouldn't have said anything about the robots or newlywed."

Hwang Suk Min who had been blank for a moment, said something unexpected to Jo Hyung Joong and the music director,

“Do you by chance have some time?”

“Excuse me?”

“Do the other participants have rehearsals on this stage?”

“No. We left today completely empty.”

The music director knew that it would not be easy to practice with the full orchestra. This was not the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts or the Seoul Arts Center. There could be no mistakes in the live performance opening in 2 days because it was to be recorded as a track live. They needed today to be a perfect rehearsal.

“What do you think about warming up and then rehearsing the mission song?”

“Warming up?”

Jo Hyung Joong and the music director could not know the meaning of warming up and just blinked.

“Oh, it’s nothing really. Jun Hyuk’s piano is so strong that we need some time to get used to it. I would like to build our ability while playing a song that we are confident in together.”

“Oh, I see. I guess our ears will receive a treat because of this.”

The music director had an unexpected opportunity to listen to Jun Hyuk’s piano skills properly. If it is a song that the orchestra is confident in, it was bound to be a classical, a concerto.

On top of that, it was killing two birds with one stone because he could check the sound with their combined performance. The music director and Jo Hyung Joong settled themselves in to enjoy the music.

“Jun Hyuk. Can you play Beethoven’s Concerto No. 5?”

“Yes. You’re talking about ‘Emperor’?”

“That’s right. Should we try just the 2nd part?”

Skipping the 1st part to play the 2nd was an excellent choice.

The 1st part had a feeling of 'clarity,' 'grandeur,' and 'strength,' whereas the 2nd part would allow them to see an unhurried piano with a 'bittersweet' feeling. It could have been the best choice to calm Jun Hyuk's assaultive piano.

It seemed Jun Hyuk could guess Hwang Suk Min's intentions because his face relaxed.

"It was part of our repertoire a few days ago. Let's try with that for fun. We would like to try playing something we're more familiar with to learn to play with you."

Hwang Suk Min stressed again that it was not to be a match between the piano and orchestra, but a performance to get to know each other. He knew better than anyone else that if Jun Hyuk were to show Beethoven's force, the orchestra would collapse.

"Since it's your first time playing in concert, let's keep going even if there's a mistake or something you don't like. It's just a warm up anyway. That's okay?"

"Yes."

Jun Hyuk's heart started to race again. To play a piece by Beethoven! With an orchestra.

Until now, he had played Beethoven while imagining orchestra parts. At the thought that he would be playing with a real orchestra instead of imagining it, his anxiety disappeared and instead was full of anticipation.

"If anyone has an extra score, can you give it to our pianist?"

"It's okay. I memorized all of the parts."

"Really? Seeing as you're able to memorize it, you must have practiced it a lot."

Hwang Suk Min who had been turning his head from Jun Hyuk thought of what he had just said.

All of the parts!

It could not be?

“Hang on. When you say you memorized all of the parts, do you mean.....?”

“Right. I memorize all of the parts.”

The noise of scores rustling on stands stopped. Had they heard correctly? Could they have misheard something? Was it possible to remember all of the sounds that an orchestra needed to make?

“This... well I’ve taken a hit. You memorize scores whole? How much do you have to practice to memorize scores?”

Hwang Suk Min and the other performers knew of Jun Hyuk’s past through the broadcast and press. After wandering as an orphan, it had only been 2 years since he started music. It seemed an impossible feat even if he had only practiced Beethoven nonstop.

“You’re not one of those geniuses we see in dramas who can listen to a song once and memorize the entire score, are you?”

Jun Hyuk’s gaze at Hwang Suk Min without response gave the answer. He was that kind of person. Jun Hyuk’s heart started to race again. To play a piece by Beethoven! With an orchestra.

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Hwang Suk Min who had been turning his head from

“It couldn’t be?”

He was so surprised that he dropped the baton in his hand.

“Really? You can listen to something once and memorize all of the parts?”

“Yes.”

Hwang Suk Min was speechless. They were also going through a camera test for the live broadcast in 2 days. There were 3 cameras rolling at the moment. The staff members who had been watching their conversation through the camera lens were also speechless.

“Ah, it’s not all songs. I can’t seem to memorize lyrics of even short pop songs.”

He can’t memorize 3 minutes of lyrics, but he can memorize an enormous amount of notes? No one on the stage could understand.

“Then don’t you forget what you memorized?”

“No.”

This meant that there were hundreds of songs saved in Jun Hyuk’s head. When beginning studies to become a conductor, they had to memorize the 50 songs that are played most first. No, they had to study until they memorized them. They had to read a score as they listened to the music countless times to memorize one song. Still, all conductors without exception conducts while looking at a score. They always have a score to check just in case something unexpected happens.

Hwang Suk Min had been impressed by the image of Jun Hyuk’s talent that he had seen on broadcast – arranging a song on the spot, playing the drums incredibly to perfect a song. The piano he had just shown was only capable with a first-class pianist who ruled an orchestra.

This is not a flash of talent. Is he not the second Mozart?

Chapter 82

While everyone was silent in disbelief, Jo Hyung Joong spoke. As the person who had seen Jun Hyuk's talent the most, he was surprised when he heard that Jun Hyuk could memorize all music, but he was not as shocked as the others.

"Teacher Hwang. Let's finish up the concert first. The day isn't very long."

"Ah, this... I was just so surprised... This is a pianist who catches us off guard."

Hwang Suk Min shook his head as he picked up his baton.

"There there. Let's all get ourselves together and focus. At this rate, we'll ruin the performance."

Everyone positioned their instruments and looked at the conductor with his baton, waiting for the signal.

"Okay, then we're trying this properly."

The members of the orchestra held each of their instruments.

Hwang Suk Min checked to see that Jun Hyuk was ready in front of the piano and slowly moved the baton.

The 2nd part of Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 Emperor began.

The 1 minute 25 second elegant introduction came out through the strings, and the music started slowly with the weak and delicate piano solo that picked up the music from the strings.

A piano that was neither aggressive nor extreme. It was not trying to press another part down to win. It was going out slowly on its own. It was a performance that was being considerate so the people who would be joining soon would not experience difficulty.

Continuing, the woodwinds' sad melody spilled over Jun Hyuk's left hand piano

instrumental. When Jun Hyuk was playing the chords of the 16th notes, the orchestra followed the piano. Soon after, they began to play 2 of 3 each. The 60 performers were much more comfortable with this song than they were with From the Sun to the Boy. It was not because they had practiced it countless times. It was because they could feel the piano's intention to carry them along.

Hwang Suk Min began to open his heart. The orchestra was naturally following the piano's lead. It was as though Jun Hyuk was conducting the orchestra while playing the piano as Beethoven did.

When the 2nd part was over, the performers were all smiling broadly. The Jun Hyuk who had criticized them so severely was nowhere to be found. They were sitting in front of Jun Hyuk's piano that was as if it were saying it accepted their performance and to trust it and follow along.

Hwang Suk Min put his baton down to indicate that he had achieved his goal and spoke to the performers,

"This... This isn't something we should just be smiling about."

At this, the performers began to move their feet. Since both hands were holding their instruments, they applauded by moving their feet.

"Was it Argerich?"

Empress of piano, Martha Argerich.

Hwang Suk Min could understand where Jun Hyuk's power in pressing down the orchestra during 'From the Sun to the Boy' came from. Argerich's piano – a charisma so overwhelming that it could swallow a first-class orchestra whole. They did not have the ability to withstand that.

"I see. You're saying that you have the skills to perfectly reproduce Argerich's piano within 2 years? I'm going to go crazy. How many gods of music are in your body?"

Hwang Suk Min could not think of Jun Hyuk as anything but God's mistake. Normally, God only allocated one talent. And one could be called a genius with just that one talent. But he could not begin to tell how many talents Jun Hyuk had.

Hwang Suk Min lightly shook his head and brushed off his thoughts as he looked at

Jun Hyuk. That was enough warming up. They needed to go back to the mission song.

“Okay. Now should we try the mission song? Jun Hyuk, are you ready? Can you bring everyone along like you did with Beethoven just now?”

Jun Hyuk nodded his head vigorously.



After rehearsing a few times, Hwang Suk Min looked at Jun Hyuk. Jun Hyuk had taken his hands off of the piano and was also looking at Hwang Suk Min. When their eyes met, Hwang Suk Min laughed and Jun Hyuk smiled.

The music director who had checked the sound did not have to worry about the live stage. He had no doubt that it would be the program’s best stage.

Hwang Suk Min put his baton down and spoke to Jun Hyuk,

“Let’s talk.”

The two people moved their seats to a corner of the stage.

“It’s the truth that you’re able to memorize a song after hearing it once, right?”

“Yes.”

“I’m sure you’ve compared different orchestras playing the same song.”

“Yes, of course.”

“What do you think?”

“It’s fun. If you keep listening while comparing them, you can tell what the conductor is thinking and what his habits are.”

“I guess those differences are in the differences between each conductor’s music?”

“Yes.”

Even while playing the same song, the feeling was different by the person playing it.

But it meant that Jun Hyuk could tell the difference by each of the instruments.

The ability to point out the subtle difference in a violin meant that he could reproduce the performances of master musicians now. It was a talent that any conductor would envy. While others had to listen to it hundreds of times to identify that subtle difference, he has the ability do it as soon as he hears it.

It was what students dreamt of. The dream of automatically memorizing a textbook or reference book. Then there would be no need to study.

Ultimately, it meant that if Jun Hyuk wanted to, he could take the baton and perform the music of the greats like Bernstein, Georg Scholte, Furtwängler, and Karajan.

Hwang Sung Min could understand how the skill Jun Hyuk had shown on broadcast had been created over just 2 years. He would not have needed the process of learning to play instruments. It was just an issue of skill.

“By chance, in Beethoven’s No. 9... can you hear each of the sounds in the choir?”

“Yes because it just means that the number of instruments is increasing by the number in the choir.”

“The song is 74 minutes long. It’s tremendous if you combine the number of instruments and the choir.....”

Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9

The best work in the history of symphonies, designated as a World Programme Heritage. Conductor Karajan of the Berlin Philharmonic had decided that the 74 minute symphony needed to be recorded on a CD. When Philips, the developer of CDs, accepted this the standard length of CDs was changed from 60 minutes to 75 minutes.

A work that boasts of the highest level of difficulty.

It was hard to believe Jun Hyuk when he said that he had listened to a song like this and memorized it.

Hwang Suk Min spoke with Jun Hyuk for a while. He did not just memorize the songs, he understood their interpretations. There is an incredible difference between memorizing and understanding. Hwang Suk Min who had scrutinized Jun Hyuk’s

talent felt as though he had found a treasure.

On the one hand, the broadcast production team felt as though they had picked up an entire treasure chest.

Jun Hyuk and the orchestra's rehearsal was more dramatic than the stage that they would be showing on live broadcast.

Speechless performers, the orchestra collapsing at Jun Hyuk's piano. Even the Beethoven that Jun Hyuk and the orchestra played together perfectly. They had filmed magical scenes.

The production team who had recorded all of this needed to think about how they would use it for the broadcast airing in 2

days.

There was also a person who thought for a while before grabbing his phone. This was conductor Hwang Suk Min.

Chapter 83

“Teacher. This is Hwang Suk Min.”

– Oh wow, Teacher Hwang. It’s been a while. How have you been?

“I’ve been pretty much the same.”

– I guess there’s something going on? What is it? Did you want to get a drink? You’re calling this old woman out of the blue.

“No. I might have to cram for an exam. Let’s do drinks next time. I called you because I think I found a gem and I wanted to see what you thought of him.”

– Gem? A pianist?

“Yes. He’s 17 years old, but he’s only been playing the piano for 2 years.”

– 17? Then he started at 15... That’s very late.

“Due to that, he isn’t bound to standards and is very free. No, rather than free, should I say he’s wild? Anyway, he’s really something.”

He did not think that Jun Hyuk was free, but it was difficult to pinpoint a way to describe him.

– Is that so? But do I really have to see him? If you say he’s a gem, he’s a gem.

“There’s... something that bothers me but I don’t know what it is. I can’t tell if it’s a flaw or his color.”

– I see. Bring him over sometime. Let’s see him together.

“Thank you, teacher. Then.”

When Hwang Suk Min hung up, Jo Hyung Joong who had been next to him opened his mouth slightly,

“Uh... Who were you just talking to?”

“Oh, it was Professor Jeon Hye Jin. You know her, right?”

“Jeon Hye Jin? The pianist Professor Jeon Hye Jin?”

“Yes.”

At 24, she came in 3rd place in the Long Thibaud Competition (biennial piano and violin competition in Paris) and started to tour the world. She did not have the skill to be called on by world-famous symphonies like Vienna, New York, and Berlin, but she was successful enough to hold piano recitals with orchestras of high standards in each city.

When she returned to Korea after living abroad for about 10 years, she was scouted by many universities as the first person to go up in the Long Thibaud Competition. She is now serving as a professor at the Music Conservatory, a Korean educational institution.

“Were you talking about Jun Hyuk?”

“Yes.”

“Is there a problem with Jun Hyuk’s piano?”

“Honestly, it’s an amazing skill. It’s almost impossible for someone to reach this level with self-education... but if he had received formal education, he would have been an outstanding pianist.”

“But why.....?”

“There’s something that bothers me, but I can’t pinpoint what it is. And if Professor Jeon Hye Jin is interested, it could be a great opportunity for Jun Hyuk.”

“Oh, I see.”

Hwang Suk Min’s real objective was to see if Jun Hyuk had the talent to stand on major, international stages with other geniuses instead of being wasted on a TV show like this.

Two days after Jun Hyuk and the orchestra finished rehearsing, a bus was taking the final 12 participants to the Sangam-dong broadcast station in Seoul.

There were still more than 12 hours left before the live broadcast, but backstage was noisier than a marketplace, and there were staff members moving busily everywhere. The 12 participants who were standing amidst all of this awkwardly were not the protagonists of the stage, but just props.

“Everyone listen up. You have to be alert today. Don’t run around. If you need something, tell your manager. These 3 people here are managers for the day. They’ll take care of everything you need.”

The participants memorized the faces of the three strongly built men.

“There’s no point in asking other people for what you need. Even if they say okay, it’s not their job... so they’re just answering out of courtesy. You have to make your requests to these 3 people. Keep that in mind.”

The production team was so busy inspecting the 11 participants excluding Jun Hyuk for the sound, light, stage equipment, et cetera that they did not know how time was flying.

After finishing his rehearsal, Kwak Hye Sung came backstage and sat down blankly, looking wearier than everyone else. After watching his opponents’ rehearsals, he could not shake the feeling that he would be one of the two eliminations today.

He could see it in the expressions of the staff after he was done singing. He had seen that they looked bored without any emotion, surprise, or admiration.

His stage looked like it was included to fill the time. No one showed anticipation for his performance.

“Try shouting boldly.”

“Oh, it’s you Jun Hyuk. I heard you’re not rehearsing?”

“No. We did our rehearsal the day before yesterday.”

Kwak Hye Sung took the water bottle that Jun Hyuk handed to him and thought of what he just said.

“But... shout what?”

“Didn’t I tell you before? I told you to use the technique you used in vocal training to bring change to the song.”

“Honestly, I don’t have the confidence.”

“Then what are you going to do? Are you going to sing in this dejected state without confidence?”

Kwak Hye Sung seemed to be so removed that he did not even want to respond.

“There’s still a lot of time left. Don’t we start at 10 at night? That’s enough time to practice.”

“Then can you help me a little? You don’t have rehearsals anyway.”

“What can I help with? You’re just doing what you know how to do. You can just do it. You’re a lot more apprehensive than you seem.”

Jun Hyuk left Kwak Hye Sung’s side after he spoke.



“You handed over the judge and MC scripts?”

“Yes.”

“How about the list of eliminations?”

“I handed them over. Nam Seung Hee and Kwak Hye Sung, right?”

“Yeah. Also, how is Son Jin Young’s expression?”

“He seems a little upset. I think he was expecting her to go on air at least twice.”

“We’re going to be strict from now on. We have to eliminate them in order, since we don’t know if a dark horse might appear.”

Producer Kim Ki Sik was reviewing the cue sheet one more time before the live

broadcast that was approaching in an hour. The players in today's 1 and a half hour live broadcast would be the 12 participants, the MC, judges, and audience. Producer Kim Ki Sik is the maestro conducting all of these people.

Before MC Moon Kyung Min who was in charge of proceedings went on stage, he paced backstage while peeking at the audience to relieve his anxiety.

"What happened? It's too unilateral."

MC Moon Kyung Min was scolding the staff taking care of him. That was how worried he was regarding the audience's excessive bias.

"We're going crazy too. We chose the audience by area and age but....."

"Don't we have to reduce the placards and signs? They're all Jang Jun Hyuk. You're going to put this out on air?"

"Senior, the staff is going around the entire audience switching them appropriately."

"I don't know about anything else, but it's a huge problem if the other kids' performances finish and there isn't a reaction. Practice that with them. It's a contest with 12 people, not Jang Jun Hyuk's fan meeting."

It was clear that unless it was a family member or friend of the 11 participants, everyone in the audience was there for Jun Hyuk.

After 2 hours of waiting, the audience complaints began to trickle down. Then, an announcement came out and the stage lights began to dance. The 1st live stage had started.

Chapter 84

“Hello. I am MC Moon Kyung Min of Tomorrow’s Star. We have come to the 5th season of ‘Tomorrow’s Star’. This season, with a lot of news and raised standards for participants.....”

The MC’s cheesy praise of the program and introductions of the judges continued. Once each of the judges relayed their greetings to the audience, the MC explained the assessment criteria.

“I will tell you the evaluation regulations. Until the top 5, judge scores will be 50%, text message votes will be 45%, and the audience vote that we are introducing this season will be 5%. The sum of the results will decide which finalists advance to the next round.”

The atmosphere on the field was clearly different than with TV viewers. There was a difference in the sound quality between a music hall sound system and a TV speaker. This is a new formula to reflect that difference in the scores.

“Those of you in the audience can use the button that you were given when you came in, to enter your vote. There are three opportunities to make your vote. You can vote during the performance and you can vote after you listen to everyone’s songs. Please choose the three people that you would like to see in the next round and press their numbers.”

Lastly, he instructed them on audience participation which is a way to raise viewer ratings,

“Viewers can enter their votes by texting the number at the bottom of the TV screen. #5700, press #5700 and send the text after typing the participant name and participant number.”

He introduced each of the 12 participants and got the audience to cheer. When he introduced Jun Hyuk last, the audience showed that they had already decided their votes.

It was almost impossible to proceed with the broadcast because the audience was

cheering and chanting 'Jang Jun Hyuk!' so loudly that the other 11 participants' families had twisted expressions.

Young women cheered him for his looks, young men for his rebellious temperament, and older people out of compassion.

MC Moon Kyung Min was trying to abate the audience's fervor and was finally able to return it to its normal state with the staff running around to calm everyone down.

When Moon Kyung Min's introductions ended, a countdown began on the TV screen, further creating suspense.

"Okay, the texting votes begin now. People of Korea, we ask that you think carefully about who you would like to see in the next round and participate in the vote."

Fanfare sounded to indicate that an elaborate show was soon to start, and the competition began.

"The first participant to grace the stage is....."



A junior assistant producer came running to a Producer Kim Ki Sik who let out a breath of relief thinking that everything was proceeding smoothly.

"Senior, we're in trouble."

"What is it now?"

"We're overwhelmed with text messages."

"What? We just started."

"That's....."

"It can't be Jun Hyuk?"

Not even Producer Kim Ki Sik had not expected the reaction to be to this extent.

"Yes. The broadcast's board is no joke either. They're saying forget everything, it's Jun

Hyuk. What should we do?”

“How about the audience?”

“It seems members of the audience are all giving one out of the three votes to Jun Hyuk. Over 95% of them already voted for Jun Hyuk at least once.”

They did not need to see that the remaining 5% were related to the other participants to figure it out.

“You have records of internet preference statistics, right? Which group has the lowest participation rate?”

“Hold on.”

The assistant producer went through vote statistics.

“30 year old men.”

“Then adjust the preference graph a little for people who aren’t Jun Hyuk.”

“Excuse me?”

The assistant producer could not understand Producer Kim Ki Sik’s intention.

“You don’t understand?? I’m telling you to put out the graph showing the other kids as the preference of 30 year old men. Then, 30 year old men who were watching TV will send in their text votes for Jun Hyuk.”

“Oh, I see.”

“And give me a real-time update on the texting usage data.”

“Okay, I will.”

Backstage was as frantic as the control room. People from the sponsorship companies were walking around checking to see if the makeup was okay and if there were no problems with the clothing.

Jun Hyuk was looking at a tuxedo hanging on one wall and thinking of an excuse not

to wear it.

Last night, Yoon Kwang Hun had come to the dorm for the first time.

“Sir.”

Jun Hyuk was surprised that Yoon Kwang Hun had appeared without calling ahead, but also thankful.

“Hey. Are you eating well? You have to rest well tonight since the first stage is tomorrow.”

“You’re not coming tomorrow?”

“No. It’ll get noisy if I go. The lawsuit isn’t over yet. Reporters are going to come swarming. Don’t worry. I’ll watch you really carefully on the huge screen at the cafe.”

Yoon Kwang Hun pulled a black outfit from the car.

“I prepared this so you could wear it for your performance tomorrow. You’re performing with an orchestra, so you should do them this courtesy.”

“Is this a suit?”

“It’s a tuxedo. The conductor will be wearing this too, so you need to match it.”

“Tuxedo? Are you talking about those penguin clothes?”

“Yeah.”

He had not imagined that he would have to wear penguin clothing, but he could not express his aversion. He could in Yoon Kwang Hun’s face the heart of parents buying suits for their children when they graduate from high school to go to college, or when they land their first jobs.

“Jun Hyuk, what are you doing? Hurry up and change. You have to start getting your makeup done. There isn’t even an hour until your performance.”

One of the staff members brought two people in charge of makeup to Jun Hyuk.

“Has Teacher Hwang Suk Min arrived?”

“Yeah. He’s with the orchestra members. Why? Do you need to meet him?”

“No. Have you seen the clothes they’re wearing?”

“Clothes? All of the orchestra members were wearing suits and the conductor was wearing a tuxedo. Why? You have a tuxedo too.”

“Oh... I see.”

He had no choice but to wear clothing like a penguin. And the torture of having to paint his face was waiting for him.



The performances continued in turn. Jessica showed a performance great enough for her agency to push for her to become the winner.

She showed that she had gone through rigorous training by releasing colorful vocals, and her stage manners did not fall short of established artists.

The judges praised her highly and only Lee Sung Chul pointed out a small flaw as had been indicated on the script.

“If the variation is too excessive in R&B, it feels forced. You don’t sing to show off.”

Lee Hae Jun who was the only other participant the same age as Jun Hyuk showed new potential with the dancing skills he had learned in training.

When there is someone who shows new potential, there’s also someone who is unable to show even half of their skills. Nam Seung Hee could not show the fortes of her voice while she was trying to express the merriness of the original song. She was caught up in the thought that she needed to sing easily and lightly and was unable to show her true colors. As she kept singing in a way that she herself could not be satisfied with, her voice grew smaller further into the second half. It felt as though she had stopped singing in the middle.

Nam Seung Hee had been expecting a low score, but wanted to cry when judge Lee Eun Jin commented that the song selection might have been a miss. The broadcast station had chosen the song to make her sing. She also thought of Jun Hyuk’s view that

she fit better with ballads.

As a result, she left the stage after receiving a score that barely reached over 80.

“The next person is Kwak Hye Sung, who has an explosive voice. The song he will sing today is Kim Kyung Ho’s The People Who Make Me Sad.”

When the MC’s introduction ended, footage was revealed while Kwak Hye Sung stood on the center of the stage, refining his breath.

The sad lyrics of the song that made Kim Kyung Ho famous were overwhelmed by his knife-like treble. There was a point that everyone anticipated from Kwak Hye Sung – instead of Kim Kyung Ho’s treble that was like a fine knife, his heavy and explosive voice. The judges and audience did not have different expectations.

But as the first verse ended and the chorus began, Kwak Hye Sung’s sound began to change little by little. When he reached the high-pitched part, he burst out in a delicate high tone that did not fall behind the original singer’s.

The audience and judges were surprised by the voice that did not seem like it would ever come from the large body. There was another person who was most surprised.

“Is that jerk crazy? What is this?”

The very first person to be surprised was the music director. A completely different technique had come out than he had shown in rehearsal and while recording the track.

“What happened?”

“I don’t know. I think he’s improvising.....”

“Is he stupid? He should’ve practiced like this in rehearsal. The broadcast isn’t a joke.”

However, there was also a person who had to be cool-headed in this situation. Kim Ki Sik left the sound to the music director and was keeping an eye on the video.

“Camera 3. Take 2 seconds. Get Lee Sung Chul’s face – his surprised expression.”

The image of Lee Sung Chul sticking his tongue out filled the monitor.

“Okay. Number 1 main again.”

When the chorus was repeated, Kwak Hye Sung’s heavy tone overwhelmed the audience. It was a performance that made everyone feel as though there were two people singing.

When the song finished, the audience sent lavish applause and Kwak Hye Sung looked bright. He had no regrets left. He knew that he had shown the skill he already had along with everything he had learned until now. He was able to listen to the judge’s evaluation calmly.

Lee Sung Chul held the mic and hesitated for a moment,

“Um... Kwak Hye Sung showed a completely different color from what was expected with this song. We had been expecting an explosive and heavy vocals, but we did not know that we would get to hear unrestrained trebles of various techniques.”

As Lee Sung Chul’s expression looked as though he was going to keep praising Kwak Hye Sung, Producer Kim Ki Sik reminded him,

“Sung Chul, Hye Sung is going to be eliminated. Wrap it up.”

Lee Sung Chul heard Kim Ki Sik’s desperate request and continued,

“However, it was apparent in the second half that you were singing without the ability to handle the sudden change in technique. If a singer can’t digest it perfectly, it results in it coming out awkwardly. My score is.....”

“Senior Lee, give him praises.”

Lee Eun Jin followed the producer’s request that he heard in her earphone.

“I actually received it well. It was inexperienced and there were mistakes, but I would like to praise Kwak Hye Sung just for showing potential. My score is.....”

The score was low compared to the audience reaction, but Kwak Hye Sung did not care. He was more satisfied with this song than he was with any of the other songs that he had shown until now.

MC Moon Kyung Min refined his voice as he looked at the audience full of excitement,

“The 1st live broadcast of Tomorrow’s Star. The last participant to grace the stage is the famous Jang Jun Hyuk. The next stage is a completely different type of performance that has never been seen in the 5 seasons of Tomorrow’s Star. It’s an instrumental, without singing.”

“Cue footage insert.”

Chapter 85

On the large screen and TV monitor behind the stage, scenes of Jun Hyuk's rehearsal and his image performing multiple instruments in Jo Hyung Joong's recording studio came out.

Meanwhile, a float appeared behind the stage and 60 orchestra members took position on the dark stage.

"Lights!"

Kim Ki Sik suddenly turned the lights on with a signal, and the conductor and Jun Hyuk slowly came up from either side of the stage wearing tuxedos. As soon as they appeared, all of the orchestra members stood up and showed courtesy to the conductor and pianist. The audience exploded in greater applause than they had shown until now, and the staff were running around trying to quiet them.

The two men bowed lightly toward the audience and shook hands. Hwang Suk Min stood on the podium in front of the orchestra, and Jun Hyuk sat in front of the grand piano.

As soon as Jun Hyuk sat down in front of the piano, the audience became silent.

When Hwang Suk Min held the baton up exaggeratedly, the audience stopped breathing for a moment. The baton was controlling not only the performers, but also the audience.

When he moved his baton, the rest that Jun Hyuk had so demanded was expressed and the audience let out their breath when the first note came out.

The strings, winds, and piano appeared. There was applause at the introduction beginning with force. When Jun Hyuk played the piano on top of the smooth and low cello sound, a few people in the audience began murmuring the lyrics as though recalling memories.

The music grew more and more elaborate.

Practicing and playing in a concert with an audience were markedly different. The audience's gazes and applause, their energy changes the performers. Performers who cannot get past this wither, while those who are able to accept all of it, become more ambitious.

Hwang Suk Min intended to show the best performance and used his baton to steadily raise the tempo. Jun Hyuk felt the tempo change suddenly and looked at Hwang Suk Min.

The provoking smile that Hwang Suk Min had shown upon their first meeting.

Jun Hyuk understood the conductor's demand and raised his tempo. When he started the climax, he was standing up and playing the piano. When the violin played the guitar solo played by Kim Sae Hwang in the original, Jun Hyuk's fingers became even faster.

Producer Kim Ki Sik filled the screens with a close-up of Jun Hyuk's fingers.

Hwang Suk Min ignored the two times they repeated the chorus in rehearsal and repeated it four times, dragging out Jun Hyuk's piano endlessly and the violinists had to move their bows in a frenzy as though their strings would break.

The TV editing was as brilliant as the music was elaborate, displaying the orchestra's grandeur.

After Hwang Suk Min and Jun Hyuk played the last note as they met eyes, they were panting. In the control room, Kim Ki Sik was panting along with them.

If it had been a recorded broadcast, he would have been able to produce a screen layout far more thrilling than an action movie... His face was full of regret.

When a performance that was supposed to be 5 minutes long ended after 6 minutes, the audience and judges were giving a standing ovation.

The audience's endless cheering and clapping showed who the main of today's show was. The MC had no choice but to bring conductor Hwang Suk Min to Jun Hyuk's side while he was waiting for the judges' commentary. When Hwang Suk Min appeared on the stage again, the applause became louder. He gave a smile of satisfaction as he took Jun Hyuk's hand, and they greeted the audience once more.

“An instrumental without lyrics falls short in delivery. However, I believe that Jun Hyuk showed his inherent power to the audience with the melody and harmony of the piano, rather than delivering a message. I enjoyed it very much.”

Continuing from Yoon Jung Su, two judges only had compliments to give. There needed to be a villain to create balance however. The villain role was taken on by Son Jin Young.

“The music was so perfect that there are no flaws to point out. Though Jun Hyuk’s ability does play a part, it is true that you piggybacked on the emotion that an orchestra invokes. We cannot leave out the aspect that if you had done a piano solo without the orchestra, you would not have been able to create a piece of this standard. We need to consider this in order to make a fair judgment. My score is.....”

The cheering continued each time a score was revealed.

“That was Jang Jun Hyuk, who is the only participant today to receive over 90 points from all of the judges. As such, the judges’ scores have been finalized. Now, your votes will decide the fates of the 12 participants. Please enter your last votes while watching these highlight videos.”

On MC Moon Kyung Min’s encouragement, the highlight videos came on and advertisements aired.

“Performances of the top 12. We will end the voting soon.”

MC Moon Kyung Min announced the eliminations in a tone full of suspense,

“Participant number 4, Nam Seung Hee. Number 9, Kwak Hye Sung. These two people are the first eliminations. Please give them a round of applause.”

When the announcement was over, Nam Seung Hee burst out in tears and Kwak Hye Sung looked calm.

Jun Hyuk’s first performance ended like this.



After the performances, another stage of happiness and sadness was to open. After today's stage, there was only one person backstage who was happy. It was Jun Hyuk.

The participants thought it unfair that Jun Hyuk went last and had an orchestra backing him up.

Jessica was especially shocked because she thought that she had shown a perfect performance. She was nervous that she would not be able to win no matter how well she sang because the text votes were always in favor of Jun Hyuk.

The broadcast station did not reveal the texted vote results to the public, but the participants heard it from the crew. They would have also alerted each of their agencies to this as well. Jun Hyuk had taken over a whopping 78% of the votes.

Jun Hyuk was not happy because of the favorable results. It was because he had felt the power provided by an audience for the first time. He had been able to feel that the audience gave their bodies to his music and had been impressed by it.

The fact that there was someone listening to his music gave him happiness incomparable to that of performing with the orchestra.

There were two other people who were immersed in happiness. One was Producer Kim Ki Sik. Though he had been apprehensive, his first attempt at an instrumental had been a huge success. When he received an encouraging call from the director of the station, he could guess that the viewer ratings were phenomenal. S

The other person was conductor Hwang Suk Min. He felt he had discovered a born performer with a perfect performance on a first live stage, and his ability to accept and keep the flow going even with a sudden change.

"Jun Hyuk, there's somewhere you have to go with me tomorrow."

"Where?"

"Let's go meet the most recognized pianist I know in our country. I was going to take you once the program was over, but I can't wait any longer."

Jun Hyuk must have become curious at the mention of the best pianist, because he

noded his head delightedly.

Hwang Suk Min rushed to find Producer Kim Ki Sik who was enjoying the aftertaste of the performance. Kim Ki Sik also ran to Hwang Suk Min as soon as he saw him.

“Ah, teacher. Thank you for today’s performance. We were able to create a lively stage because of you. Thank you so much.”

“It’s no problem. Jun Hyuk made the stage what it was. All we did was provide the accompaniment.”

After they exchanged courtesies, Hwang Suk Min said the reason he had sought out Producer Kim.

“Producer, the next stage is in a week?”

“Yes. It’s every Thursday.”

“Then can I borrow Jun Hyuk tomorrow morning?”

“Tomorrow? Why do you need him?”

“Oh, there’s a music professor who would like to meet Jun Hyuk.”

“Jun Hyuk? Is this because of the piano?”

“Yes. He won’t have time?”

“Oh, it’s okay. But... can a camera follow you?”

He did not know where Hwang Suk Min was taking Jun Hyuk, but it was a producer’s instinct. They need to film it whatever it is. He needs to follow the cardinal rule that scenes result from editing banal things.

“A camera?”

“Yes. It’s nothing really. We want to use it for broadcasting material. It won’t be at a level to be an interference.”

“Oh, I guess.....”

“Yes, then I’ll tell Jun Hyuk. Then can we meet here at the broadcast station tomorrow morning?”

“Let’s do that. I’ll be here by 9.”

Chapter 86

The next day, Hwang Suk Min took Jun Hyuk to the Korean Music Conservatory in order to meet Jeon Hye Jin. When they opened a classroom door and entered, an average looking middle-aged woman fussed over Hwang Suk Min.

“Goodness. It’s really been a long time, Teacher Hwang. Hasn’t it?”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin saw Jun Hyuk come in after, and quickly let go of Hwang Suk Min’s hand.

“Oh goodness. If I had known you were going to bring such a good looking young man, I would have taken more care. I wore just anything today. I thought he was going to be a baby when I heard he was 17, but isn’t he a model? I guess I’ll have to buy Teacher Hwang a drink. Ho ho ho.”

Jun Hyuk had followed Hwang Suk Min here full of expectations for the best female pianist in Korea. But his first impression was of a common chatty old woman.

“Isn’t it a scam if he’s good at playing piano with this face?”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin stopped talking and stared at Jun Hyuk blankly, holding his hands.

“Why did you learn to play the piano? To get girls? You look like girls would get in line even if you didn’t play the piano.”

Jun Hyuk could not endure it any longer and tried to pull his hands away, but Professor Jeon Hye Jin did not let him. She was gripping his hands with strength.

“Are you really a professor of piano?”

“Why? I don’t seem like it?”

“No. You speak too much like an old neighborhood woman.”

“What? I’m chatty because I’m an old lady. Anyway, sit here.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin led Jun Hyuk by the hand to sit on the sofa, and sat down right next to him. She had not yet released his hands.

Professor Jeon Hye Jin who had been touching his hands examined his fingertips.

“This isn’t the hand of a pianist. Seeing your rough fingertips, it seems you play stringed instruments, and with your calloused palms, you play the drums too. Your calluses are severe where you hold the sticks.”

It was certain that this was not an old woman who could be seen anywhere. She was able to identify exactly which instruments he played just by looking at his palms.

“Since you play the drums, the string instrument is guitar? Do you play pop music? Band?”

Hwang Suk Min must have thought that nothing would be left of Jun Hyuk’s hands if left alone, because he cut in,

“Ah, this kid is a little hot these days. He’s appearing on an audition program right now.”

She had occasionally seen idol musicians on TV and wondered what they had eaten to grow so well, but the child that Teacher Hwang brought made her thoughts exceed even that.

“Really? Is he going to become an idol? He seems like he could be and more.”

She finally looked around her and discovered the VJ holding a camera.

“Hey, mister. Please turn off the camera, or leave the room. Even if I look like this, I think of modeling importantly. Quickly!”

The VJ lingered at Jeon Hye Jin’s sudden yelling, and shut off his camera when Hwang Suk Min gave him a look.

“I... I’m sorry, professor. It’s because the program he’s appearing on is not over yet.”

As Hwang Suk Min cautiously explained the situation, Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s face relaxed.

“Is that so? Then camera man.”

“Yes, professor.”

“Film at an angle so you don’t get my face. What can I do when this is your job.”

The VJ bowed his head and held the camera again.

“So, you said you’re Jang Jun Hyuk?”

“Yes.”

“There’s no need to talk. Should we hear your piano first? Since Teacher Hwang said that you’re a gem, you must be so. Let’s see what time of gem you are.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin bolted from the sofa and pulled Jun Hyuk up.

“Should we head to the practice room?”

Students passing by them in the hall greeted Professor Jeon Hye Jin, and when they saw Jun Hyuk, they created a greater fuss than the professor had.

“Oh my goodness, it’s Jang Jun Hyuk!”

“Really? Why is Jang Jun Hyuk at our school? I saw the broadcast yesterday.”

“Is it a mission?”

The students who had found Jun Hyuk were busy texting their friends to let them know about this, and some students began taking pictures and filming videos.

Students began to gather behind Jun Hyuk as he made his way to the practice room.

“I guess you’re popular, seeing as how those kids are making such a big deal.”

Jun Hyuk shrugged in embarrassment and walked faster. After they went into an empty practice room, Professor Jeon Hye Jin glared at the students to warn them from entering.

“If you guys make a peep, I’m going to increase the assignment pieces by 10.”

At the professor's threat, the babbling students shut their mouths.

"It's finally quiet."

There was a grand piano on one side of the practice room.

The professor pointed Jun Hyuk toward the piano with a glance.

"Can you try playing?"

Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano and pressed a few keys.

"This needs to be tuned. A lot of it isn't right."

"People without talent always talk about tuning. At that state, it's much better than you'll see in a piano academy. Are you at a competition? Just play it. I have the ear to distinguish that much."

Jun Hyuk looked at the professor and smirked. It was interesting to see that the chatty old lady had been replaced with a tough judge.

Faces of students were stuck to the window on the entry door outside the practice room.

Jun Hyuk took a deep breath and after clenching his hands, he played the piano. Schubert's melody came from the piano.

"Stop."

After about 3 minutes after the music started, Professor Jeon Hye Jin spoke out shortly.

"Play something else."

Jun Hyuk looked at the professor for a moment and started playing again. A piano melody began again. This time it was Rachmaninoff.

The professor did not listen to more than 3 minutes.

"Next."

The professor watched carefully as Jun Hyuk played Bach this time, and waited until the song was over.

When Jun Hyuk finished playing, the professor clapped lightly.

“It’s good, really. My ears got a treat today. I enjoyed it.”

The professor motioned for the students who had been listening outside to enter,

“You guys heard that? Tell me what you think. Since you guys got to listen to this great performance for free, don’t you think you need to give your evaluation?”

However, none of the students spoke. The professor tsked at the silent students.

“Oy, you’re all dense. All you want to do is take pictures with him, right? If you don’t know, get out. They said he’s only played the piano for 2 years. What’s wrong with you guys who have all been playing for over 10 years? If you don’t have playing skills, you need to at least gear your ears.”

One female student worked up the courage to speak,

“I think he changes with each song. As though it isn’t one person playing these songs, but a few people switching off? That’s the feeling I got.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin looked at the student and smiled slightly,

“Well there’s at least one person whose ears are open. You get an A this semester. You don’t need to hear my lectures. Come to my office a little later to tell me your name and ID. Everyone get out.”

The professor turned to Jun Hyuk who was still sitting at the piano after kicking everyone out again.

“The Schubert piano was Dinu Lipatti? The Japanese version of the album that EMI Records released?”

“Yes.”

“Rachmaninoff was Van Cliburn from RCA Records. Bach was Glenn Gould from SONY.”

“Yes.”

“Are you able to express any famous pianist exactly?”

“I’m just roughly copying them.”

Jun Hyuk thought that she would be able to identify whichever pianist he played. Was she not the best female pianist in Korea? If she did not know that, her fame would be for nothing. But he did not know that she would be able to say the exact record in one try.

In fact, the professor’s surprise was due to the fact that Jun Hyuk had reproduced performances from famous pianists’ records without any mistakes. Most pianists were able to imitate another pianist’s style. But there were few people who could play the piano in a way that invoked the record itself.

“Roughly? If that was rough, all pianists in Korea need to stick their noses in dishwater and die. You can reproduce the performances of maestros just by playing roughly? This is. I have no words.”

Looking at the professor’s surprised face, Jun Hyuk could not hide his pride.

“You’ve taken lessons from an expert, right? For someone who is self-educated, you don’t have very many bad habits.”

She checked minor habits while he was playing the piano? Jun Hyuk was surprised again.

“Yes. From Professor Go Sae Won for 2 years.”

“What? From Go Sae Won? Go Sae Won isn’t one to stay still when you’re copying like this. What on earth did he teach you?”

Jun Hyuk felt again that the world of classical was small. He was positive they were close by the way she referred to him by his name, without a nominal. To say that everyone was connected by one degree of separation.

“I met with Professor Go Sae Won once a week. If he assigned a song, I played it... and he just watched as I played. Then if a bad habit came out, he would point it out... and that was it.”

“Without evaluating the way you play the piano or after listening?”

“No. He never said anything like that.”

“That’s strange. Why did he do that?”

It was a training method she could not understand in piano lessons. If it were Professor Go Sae Won who had studied abroad, he would have insisted on expressing a pianist’s originality. But for someone like this to end it after pointing out bad habits?

“Well that’s something I can just ask about.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin put the question behind her and began to talk about the results of examining a gem.

“What a waste. If you had started playing the piano before your fingers were developed, you would have become an incredible pianist. It’s really a waste.”

The professor went from looking at Jun Hyuk with surprise, to regret.

“Is it your dream to become a pianist?”

“No, it’s not.”

“That’s a relief. If it was, you would have just wasted 2 years. And you’re too old. If you’re 17, that’s the age when you should be preparing for competitions.”

Professor Hwang Suk Min finally realized what had been bothering him while he was listening to the two people speak. It was this.

“I see. He has the ability to replicate anyone...”

Once Hwang Suk Min realized what was bothering him, Professor Jeon Hye Jin put up a finger.

“That’s it. He doesn’t have a piano style of his own. Since he was listening to CDs of the greats and learning on his own from the beginning, he was busy just following along. It is understandable.”

Chapter 87

Hwang Suk Min also looked regrettable and could not hide it on his face. A child who should have become a world-renowned pianist became like this due to his environment.

“What if he had met a proper teacher at a young age and was able to perform freely instead of imitating others? By now, he would have been world-class, recognized internationally. He would have made people like Lang Lang and Yuja Wang jealous.”

“Professor, is it too late?”

“Late? It’s already impossible. Assessing on skill only, he’ll hear that he’s a pretty great pianist now. But world-class is impossible. A pianist who lacks, no does not have originality, cannot stand on the top.”

Does not have originality? Hwang Suk Min thought of when he played Shin Hae Chul’s song for the first time with his orchestra. He had thought that it could never be a copy with the wild ferocity that was unleashed occasionally. However, his thoughts were cut off at Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s continued words,

“The bigger issue is ‘self-education.’”

“Self-education?”

“You studied composition and command, so you may not have felt it as much. But does a wall not exist just because we can’t see it? In this world, there’s an invisible wall that hits the sky high. Especially in the world of pianos, which are the king of instruments and violins, the protagonists of orchestras.”

A high, invisible wall that exists in the world of classical. Hwang Suk Min could vaguely understand what Jeon Hye Jin was talking about.

“Pianists must go through competitions. They’re showing themselves to the world through these competitions. If you look at world-renowned pianists now, they all put forth their wins first.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin pointed to herself as she spoke,

“Look at me. I still make a living off of coming in 3rd place in the Long Thibaud Competition in 1975.”

She was not bragging, but rather there was a hint of self-chastising.

“Competitions are decided by judges, not fan votes.”

Strict judges of nations the competitions are held in. Fairness was in the titles that these judges held. Impressive careers and positions were important in making sure people had no choice but to recognize them as judges. However, it was difficult to believe that the judges’ assessment methods were based on the pianists’ ‘skills’ only.

“Do you think they’ll advance a child who was self-educated without a teacher? If a child who taught himself wins, won’t the word ‘lesson’ become meaningless? If I have talent, I don’t need lessons! This is something that can’t be said no matter what. The people controlling the world of piano will have their positions shaken or taken away if there are no lessons.”

This is not something that is only applicable to the world of piano. Vested interests that exist everywhere do not welcome collapse.

“Piano makers, whatever printer selling the scores that pour out, university reputations, the recording industry, sponsors and their nations. The pandemonium of all of these combined is what creates competitions. Piano is just a part of the business anyway.”

It was hard for Hwang Suk Min to understand the pandemonium Jeon Hye Jin spoke of. He is just an average person who does not have the skills to enter the world of this pandemonium.

“But to recognize a child who appeared out of nowhere? It can’t happen. That’s denying the business itself.”

If Jun Hyuk were to be recognized in the world of piano, it would mean talent is everything. There was no need to practice with a good piano and there was no reason to get lessons from eminent pianists. University? With countless people who prove their talent with self-education, those who pay the expensive tuition to attend university are admitting that they do not have talent.

Recognizing a genius with born talent could make all of this collapse at the same time. Geniuses are only recognized when they shine because of direction they have received. Denying the industry itself is something that cannot happen.

“And he says that becoming a pianist isn’t his dream so... I guess it doesn’t matter.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin took a glance at Jun Hyuk who had been listening to their conversation.

“If he does decide to put everything into piano now... he’s good enough that any great pianist will want to work with him... so I guess it could be possible. If he works hard under a famous person for about 5 years, I do think the possibility is sufficient. But will that be necessary? He’ll become a huge star if he does pop music, so will it be necessary to go through all the hard work?”

“But still, isn’t it such a waste?”

“I don’t think it’s such a waste with the cameras that are already on him and seeing our students fawn over him. There are many paths. Right now, it’s important that he does music. If it’s his path, it’ll happen somehow.”

Not everyone expects the spotlight just because they have the talent. Professor Jeon Hye Jin had seen many people who had born talent but turned off the light because their environment or first step had gone wrong. The fate resulting from time and place. Without that, it would just be a degenerated light.

However, Jun Hyuk had already put his foot in music. It seemed he was going to continue in music no matter what.

Honestly, Professor Jeon Hye Jin thought Jun Hyuk a waste. His age was most regrettable. Age 17 was the time to bloom in the world of piano. Rumors of identity begin and one must prepare to come out to the world.

It is to the point where the most famous competition in the world, Poland’s Chopin Piano Competition, opens once every 5 years. Even people with luck were only given two opportunities.

“Before you go, leave me your signature.”

“Excuse me?”

“My daughter goes nuts about celebrities. I’m going to give it to her.”

Jeon Hye Jin winked as she laughed. She had returned as a playful old woman from a strict pianist and professor.

Jun Hyuk gained courage from this friendly appearance to ask a question,

“But do you play the piano well?”

“Me? You don’t know who I am?”

Jeon Hye Jin was so taken aback that she was speechless. This kid who had done everything she told him to do had not know who she was?

“No. I don’t have a CD. I just assumed you’re the best because Teacher Hwang said you are.”

Jun Hyuk did not want to leave like this. He had never heard Jeon Hye Jin’s piano, but he thought that she would be incredible from the way she had been so shrewd until now.

“I’m famous! My concert ticket power is 1st place in our country for piano. And... how much does a CD cost that you didn’t buy mine? This inconsiderate kid. Ho ho.”

Jeon Hye Jin laughed heartily and approached Jun Hyuk.

“Very well. I’ll play too since I did hear yours for free.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin sat in front of the piano and began to play the 2nd part of Beethoven’s Piano Sonata Pathetique No. 8. This is a sonata that Beethoven named, “Grande Sonate Pathetique”. The 2nd part is characterized by a relaxed and beautiful melody, and it is often seen as one of this most solemn and alluring pieces. It was used often in popular music with its short and sturdy configuration.

Britain’s mezzo-soprano singer, Louise Tucker, arranged this into a pop song ‘Midnight Blue’, which was received well by the public.

“How was it?”

When Professor Jeon Hye Jin winked as she laughed, Jun Hyuk put his thumb up.

“Goodness, really?”

“Yes. Your force is awesome.”

“What? This isn’t a song that uses strength. Why do you say my force is awesome when I played this delicately and gently?”

“No matter how beautiful a knife is, you can’t hide how sharp it is. I think your strength will show even if you played a lullaby. Sleeping babies will all wake up.”

“Ho ho. You’re able to see all of that at once? Huh. Thinking about it again, it is a waste.”

Jun Hyuk could guess what the professor meant was being wasted. He had listened to the entirety of their conversation. He could fully understand that there were complicated issues involved in his becoming a pianist. And he did not have a particular longing to become a pianist.

“It’s okay if I don’t become a pianist. Instead, if I make a proper piano song, I’ll think of you as the first performer.”

Chapter 88

“What? Do you compose as well?”

“Yes.”

“Really? Do you want to play something? Something you wrote.”

Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano without hesitation. He shook his stiff fingers a few times and started playing the piano.

Plink~ plink.

The song began with a repetition of two simple notes that continued for a time. After he sped up and built suspense, there was the hearty sound of the piano filling the room.

The sound that filled the room disappeared in moments as though it was sucked back into the piano, and the song ended with one low note that laid across the ground.

Professor Jeon Hye Jin who had been drunk in the sound of the piano for 2 minutes clapped and rubbed Jun Hyuk’s face, pulling him into a hug.

“Impressive. There really was something else so you don’t have to become a pianist.”

“But... this is a little.”

An old woman making contact was uncomfortable not just for Jun Hyuk, but for any teenage boy. Jun Hyuk tried to wriggle out, but the old woman was strong.

“What? This is when I get to hug a handsome young man.”

Professor Hwang Suk Min did not hide his surprise either.

“I thought it was impressive when I saw you arrange a song, but I guess that was nothing. Goodness. There really was something else.”

Jun Hyuk was delighted with their compliments and spoke,

“Was it okay?”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin put her thumb up as Jun Hyuk had,

“This is the first time I’ve heard such a lively song since Chopin’s Dog Waltz. It’s amazing.”

Hwang Suk Min still looked surprised when he spoke,

“What’s the title of this song?”

“A Scherzo for you who has difficulty eating a meal.”

“What? It’s difficult to eat a meal? What does this mean?”

“I wrote this while watching a stray cat tear open a garbage bag to eat.”

“What? Stray cat? Ha ha. It’s the perfect title. You have great sense as well.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin clapped as she began to laugh loudly. She thought the title was fun, but also liked that he could create music from such trivial matters.

Jun Hyuk recalled when he created this song.

A stray cat that had been watching a garbage bag from under a parked car in front of the cafe. It needed to be swift and alert to seek its prey as if a wild beast, keeping watch all around it.

“Why did it end all of a sudden?”

Hwang Suk Min was asking in analysis as a conductor does,

“A cat doesn’t run away even if a person appears while it’s eating garbage. It stops eating and watches the person until it can check whether the person is just passing by or is going to chase it away.”

“I see. I looked at you wondering why it ended so suddenly... It’s a song that made the audience into the cat.”

“Oh! If you felt that way, it’s a success. He he.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin sat next to a Jun Hyuk who was laughing in satisfaction.

“Alright, so you’re appearing in an audition program right now?”

“Yes.”

“Are you going to be a singer when that’s over? Like an idol?”

“No, I can’t be a singer because I can’t sing.”

“You seem like you have no intention on becoming a singer.”

“Pretty much. There are a lot of good singers.”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin lightly hit her head. She could see this surprising child’s profile.

“So, instruments are just tools you need when making songs? Whether it’s the piano, guitar, or drums.”

“Yes.”

“I thought wrong. You weren’t just copying what you heard from CDs. You wanted to know what it would be like for a world-renowned pianist to play your song... You wanted to know that feeling, and to hear it yourself... So you cloned those pianists. Right?”

“Yes. That’s impressive. Really.”

Jun Hyuk was sincere in his admiration. He started to see this playful old woman, who could hear his self-composed song once and figure out his intentions, in a different light. He thought that he would need to purchase Professor Jeon Hye Jin’s CD and listen to it.

“Go Sae Won didn’t say anything because he also knew this. Then let me ask one thing. Why don’t you play the piano in your own style?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think I have my own style. For each song, there exists a pianist who can play it best. Those people’s performances are much better. That’s why I copy

them. If I play it in my own way, it doesn't sound very good... and it kind of sounds like I'm ruining the song....."

"I think that's just a difference between individuality and expression. Who plays better or worse is meaningless. Each has individuality."

"Even if there's individuality, I'm sure we would only pick one person if we had to choose. Regardless of individuality, a better pianist exists."

"You only pursue the best? I don't know if you're arrogant or if you're confident... You're impressive."

Professor Jeon Hye Jin had a feeling that she had guessed one of her thoughts precisely. This child could not live without music.

"Alright. I'll be anticipating the music you'll make from now on. Feel free to contact me if you need anything. I'll help you in any way I can."

Her expression and tone showed that she said this out of sincerity and not courtesy. Hwang Suk Min may have brought Jun Hyuk here for him to hear those words.

"Also, make sure you go to the hospital every month to get a check-up. The body is everything for a musician. You can't have something happen to your hand. You have to keep checking while you're healthy. For someone like you who plays multiple instruments, your hands are bound to deteriorate first."

"Oh, okay."

"No, I'll contact the hospital. You go when they call you."

Jun Hyuk politely gave the professor his farewell and left. When he came outside with Hwang Suk Min, the hall was full of students who had heard the rumor and gathered. Everyone had their phones out to take pictures of Jun Hyuk.

"These kids! Practice like this."

After Professor Jeon Hye Jin yelled at the students, she grabbed a student and brought him back into the practice room.

"Tell me about that kid who just left. What kind of kid is he?"

“Professor, you don’t know?”

“I’m asking because I don’t know.”

The student told her about Jun Hyuk’s past, participation on the audition program, and the issue that created news online.



After the 1st live stage was over, Producer Kim Ki Sik went to Yoon Jung Su’s recording studio.

“Jung Su, I heard Jang Na Rae’s track and it’s so good. Even our music director said he predicts she’ll be 1st place this week.”

“It’s great, right? I was really surprised too.”

“I heard you offered to scout her.”

“Yeah, but I told her to think about it more. She might get other offers after the 2nd performance goes out.”

Kim Ki Sik brought up a difficult favor,

“Can you just scout her? Jang Na Rae is going to be eliminated this week. Save me.”

“Jang Na Rae was this week? I was under the impression she was going until the 3rd stage.”

“She was supposed to. Lee Hae Jun and a boy from another agency were supposed to be eliminated this week.”

“Lee Hae Jun? He’s pretty good too, but he’s getting eliminated already? That’s a waste.”

“Lee Hae Jun’s going to debut next month as an idol. He’s the main vocal there... They’re thinking it’s enough if his vocals are recognized twice on a live stage. Anyway, the agency of one of the people to be eliminated asked to have him advanced to top 8. I guess they looked into it on their own and the reaction was pretty good.”

“So you’re saying the pushover is the one without an agency.”

“Yeah. What are we to do? But listening to her track, it’s so good it’s a waste to eliminate her.”

If Jang Na Rae does not make a mistake, she could give the best performance. But if she is eliminated? The viewer protest would be fierce. Though of course it would not go for more than one week.

Producer Kim was not against eliminating Jang Na Rae because of the viewer reaction. He was just struggling to keep the program alive.

“Signing a contract immediately is difficult. I’m thinking of training her slowly. Since she’s young, she might want to gain popularity quickly. If that’s what she’s thinking, I can’t sign her on.”

Yoon Jung Su was looking far into Jang Na Rae’s future. Enough to flatly refuse Producer Kim’s request.

“What happened with Jun Hyuk?”

“Jun Hyuk? Damn, I gave up too. The 3rd round is the last. He needs to get ready for the 4th performance, but he’s saying he hasn’t finished for the 3rd. I can tell he has no intention of doing anymore.”

“Producer Kim, you must be having a hard time.”

It was obvious what would happen if Jun Hyuk who had been the reason for high viewer ratings left. Producer Kim needed to prepare for that.

“Is he going to sing?”

Yoon Jung Su could not hide his curiosity. From the way Jun Hyuk had directed Jang Na Rae, he instinctively knew how to express with vocals.

“I told you, I gave up. Whatever he does, the 3rd round is the end.”

“But his track record is great, right?”

“Yeah. His mission songs from the preliminaries are good too, but his piano from the

live performance is incredible. It's topping all the charts. But I think the two versions of Kanon are the biggest waste. Especially the rock version. If we had aired edited parts of him playing all of the instruments like a music video, it would have sold better than this round's piano song."

"Why didn't you do it?"

"We don't have the rights to that. No one thought of this kind of situation. We didn't show the whole song on air... and it's just footage anyway."

Producer Kim looked as if he had lost out on something big.

"Oh right. Hyung Joong has an agreement for those two versions of Kanon."

"What? Hyung Joong? Really?"

Yoon Jung Su's eyes widened in surprise. For Jo Hyung Joong who only composes and produces to get involved in distribution issues meant that he was that confident in Jun Hyuk's music.

"Yeah. He handed a blank check to Jun Hyuk's lawyer to tell him to write the price of the songs."

"Really? That cheap man? It's no joke. Well... he did listen to it himself."

"Yeah. They agreed to go half and half in the end. I'm pretty sure they'll release the songs as soon as Jun Hyuk is eliminated. They got footage from our station as well."

"I guess Jun Hyuk is a goose that lays golden eggs."

"I'm pretty sure it'll be wild. Jun Hyuk will be able to make \$200,000 or \$300,000 in six months."

"The viewer ratings will plummet once Jun Hyuk is out. The kids this season are pretty much the same."

"That's why I'm asking you for this favor. I'm trying to make Jang Na Rae popular. She needs to take Jun Hyuk's place. I'm thinking of pushing it to a battle between Jang Na Rae and Jessica."

“Battle? They seemed to be close. The picture seems like it would come out well.”

Two people who are close in a competition of good faith. There’s bound to be applause regardless of who loses. However, Kim Ki Sik scoffed,

“Close? They hate each other. Where are friendships on a program where they have to step over each other? We just edited it so it seems that way. They’re both clever. They pretend to care for each other whenever there’s a camera present.”

“Well... anyway, I’m sorry. Signing her on now is hard. If we rush a contract or pressure her into it, the end result isn’t good. If it’s not something she really wants, she’ll lose her will.”

Kim Ki Sik needed to create a new strategy upon Yoon Jung Su’s refusal. He needed to review the contracts to ready someone to eliminate instead of Jang Na Rae.

Chapter 89

When the 2nd round began, MC Moon Kyung Min stood on the stage,

“The first top 10 stage progressed live a week ago. For the past week, something shocking happened. An instrumental topped a pop music chart for the first time in Korea.”

Tremendous applause exploded from the crowd. They were congratulating the win of the person they were rooting for.

“That’s right. It was Shin Hae Chul’s ‘From the Sun to the Boy’ that Jang Jun Hyuk performed. Jun Hyuk personally arranged a space rock song into a magnificent classical to sweep the charts. It was a moment for him to enter as a new music powerhouse. It became a hot topic when it was revealed that he had arranged all of the parts for the orchestra as well.”

He continued speaking after looking at the crowd’s reaction,

“To give you a hint, Jun Hyuk will not be singing today either. The surprising stage he will show is another point to watch for. And how far will Jun Hyuk be able to advance without singing?”

They were able to see Moon Kyung Min’s hint right away. The first stage was Jun Hyuk’s.

The stage was lit brightly with the atmosphere of a club, and six back dancers entered. However, Jun Hyuk stood in the middle of the stage and instead of moving wildly like a DJ, focused calmly on his performance.

“It’s a good thing we at least had the back dancers.”

The assistant producer spoke with a mix of self-chastisement. Producer Kim Ki Sik smirked as he watched the screen,

“It’s okay. It’s what I wanted.”

Producer Kim had prevented the music director and production team from trying to direct Jun Hyuk's performance during the rehearsal.

Jun Hyuk would be out after the 3rd round. Now, they needed to start putting out a card that would replace Jun Hyuk. This was why they had made Jun Hyuk go first. It was hard to remember the first performance after all 10 people had gone.

The audience reaction was also as expected. The youths could not help but be taken aback. They wanted to enjoy the fun music they were hearing, but the stage they were looking at was calm. The imbalance between sight and hearing made it so that they could not move.

"Judges, please match the scores to low 80s."

When the evaluation ended, MC Moon Kyung Min spoke again,

"Jun Hyuk who received the best score in the round last week was unable to receive a high score this time. It's a situation we could not predict. I think this is the zest in a competition that is shown in a live broadcast."

Jessica, who was Producer Kim Ki Sik's new card, showed again that she was a strong candidate to win. Similarly Jang Na Rae, who was being pushed forward as a dark horse, went last and gave a performance that did not fall behind the quality of the recording she had done of Yoon Jung Su's ballad.

As the judges gave high praises, the audience cheered. Tomorrow, there would be articles pitting the newly discovered Jang Na Rae against Jessica who is closest to the crown. Jun Hyuk could not even be mentioned. It is much easier for the public to forget someone than it is to keep thinking of them on their own.



"The arrangement hasn't come out yet? I guess this mission song is hard. Ha ha."

Jun Hyuk did not put his classic guitar down even when Kim Jong Suk said that it would be okay to go with a piano instrumental if he thought that he could not do it. He thought that if he were to play this song on the piano, it would be no different from the accompaniment in Lee So Ra's song.

“It’s really hard to express Lee So Ra’s emotions without ‘speech’. Lee So Ra... is really an impressive vocalist.”

‘It’s probably hard to express ‘that day’ and not Lee So Ra.’

Kim Jong Suk did not think that he would be of any help to Jun Hyuk even if he spoke more. He confessed the last feeling that he had,

“Jun Hyuk.”

“Yes.”

“Did you catch on to the fact that I’m trying to force you to sing?”

“Yes. I thought so.”

“There’s only one reason why I tried to get you to sing. I’m not expecting Mozart’s Figaro’s Wedding from you, but hoping for an oldie like John Lennon’s Imagine.”

He meant for Jun Hyuk to consider pop music as well and not just classical.

“Pop music has a shorter history than classical does. Mozart’s music has been played for 250 years, but is there something that says the Beatles’ music won’t do the same? It’s already been 50 years since ‘Yesterday’ came out. But doesn’t it still get a lot of love? I can bet it’ll still be popular 200 years later. When it’s only 2 minutes long.”

The reason why a 2 minute song with a simple melody was able to bring such emotion was Paul McCartney’s voice and lyrics.

“You don’t have to have amazing vocals. John Lennon isn’t an amazing singer. Look at Bob Dylan who is called a bard. He just throws the lyrics.”

When Jun Hyuk had given other participants help on the program, he had not paid attention to the lyrics. All he had done was help find the best way for them to express with the voice that they had.

“You need to see the emotion of a singer rather than the technical aspects of producing, composing, and directing. I wish you would try feeling that emotion while singing. That way, an oldie will come out. If you sing this with sincerity, you’ll know what I’m talking about.”

Kim Jong Suk's slow and concise tone indicated that he would no longer interfere.

"Fine. This is my last piece of advice. Play the accompaniment on the guitar. Calmly."

"Excuse me?"

"I'm going to try to sing it."

"You are?"

"Why? You think I can't sing? I've been making a living off of music for over 30 years. I bet I'm better than you."

Jun Hyuk saw Kim Jong Suk laugh, and calmly played the guitar while Kim Jong Suk delivered the lyrics.

When the song ended, Kim Jong Suk took the guitar from Jun Hyuk's arms.

"This time, I'll play the accompaniment, you try singing."

"Me?"

"Why? What's wrong? Just think of it as if you're at karaoke."

Jun Hyuk sang quietly to Kim Jong Suk's guitar. When the song ended, he must have seen how Kim Jong Suk felt on his face because he turned bright red. He had not sung well, showing how uncomfortable and unconfident he felt.

"You're just singing to show me. Singing for others to hear are professional singers. You're singing for the first time today. Don't think about showing it to me, but show it to yourself. Let other people hear it when you do the broadcast."

Kim Jong Suk pat Jun Hyuk's shoulder and left. Talking about it any more would be unnecessary nagging. He felt relieved, but also sorry to Producer Kim Ki Sik.

"Producer Kim, it's me."

– Oh, teacher. Is it going well?

"Yeah. He might sing. I heard Jun Hyuk sing just now."

– Is... that for real?

It was a voice of disbelief, and he could feel the great anticipation. Kim Jong Suk replied cautiously,

“Um... His singing isn’t very good. Don’t expect too much.”

– I see. There’s nothing we can do. You worked hard.

Kim Jong Suk had thought that Producer Kim would make a fuss, but when he heard how resigned he was, he could guess that the future rounds had already been decided.



After hanging up the phone, Kim Ki Sik yelled out,

“Hey! Production team gather. It’s an emergency meeting.”

The production team that had gathered in the conference room was curious as to what had happened, but they did not speak when they saw Kim Ki Sik’s stern face.

“Everyone needs to listen to me and come back with an answer within 30 minutes. If not, you’re all dead.”

What could it be that he’s starting with a threat?

“Jun Hyuk just sang.”

The production team had not expected these words to come from Kim Ki Sik and waited for the next.

“Apparently it’s not good.”

“What?”

“It’s just average.”

Everyone was disappointed. It seems there would be no surprise or reversal.

“Well I guess he seems more human. If he could sing well with that face and that talent,

he would really be a mistake from God. I'm starting to feel affection for him now that I know there's something he can't do."

Assistant Producer Pil Jae could not hide his sinking feeling and laughed.

"Stop talking nonsense and think about it. What do you think we should do?"

"Jun Hyuk's singing is a total mess?"

"I told you. It's at an average level. Why do you have so many questions?"

If Jun Hyuk's singing had been a hidden treasure, they would have found some way to advance him to the win. But they had lost control of the situation and Jun Hyuk himself did not have the will to keep going. The result was decided.

"Senior, let's go with the singing."

"He said it's not good."

"If we go with an instrumental, what could be different? Jun Hyuk's performance can't become a hot topic anymore. You saw how bad his 2nd round EDM track sales are? When Jang Na Rae was in 1st place, Jun Hyuk was above 50."

"Well that's a difference between a song and electronic. The consumer is different. More than a best seller at clubs, it'll go as a steady."

It was not only that. It would be sold to various entertainment programs and CFs.

"Isn't Jun Hyuk done with the 3rd round? And we got a lot of track sales from the Star Week songs he did in the preliminaries. Not to mention the 1st round orchestra."

"So what are you trying to say?"

"Viewer ratings."

There were only two objectives for an audition program. Track sales and viewer ratings.

"He's finally singing in the 3rd round. With this, we don't have to worry about viewer ratings."

“What does it matter if he can’t sing? I would actually be happier if he was tone deaf. That’s an incredible reversal. I’m sure he would gain even more popularity.”

The production team were agreement as if there was nothing left to contemplate.

“Fine. Let’s go with the viewer ratings. Send out the press release. Don’t be obvious, just let it slip.”

“Okay. There’s a rumor in the broadcasting station that Jun Hyuk might sing. You mean at this rate?”

“Yeah.”

With this, Jun Hyuk’s 3rd round elimination was decided. Jun Hyuk’s musicality was a waste, but an audition program does not exist to protect the dignity of music. It is a commercial show. They needed to be true to their field.

Chapter 90

Jun Hyuk's rehearsal was the subject of everyone's urgent attention. What would his singing be like? If he was even good at singing, there would be a reversal as intense as that of 'Sixth Sense' and he would surely be the winner.

As soon as Jun Hyuk sang the first verse, the 7 participants gave a sigh of relief. They were also certain. There were no longer any reversals.

Jun Hyuk would be eliminated.

While everyone else was in agreement, the music director had a strange expression. He thought of Kim Jong Suk in Jun Hyuk's song.

'He's really an impressive man.'

He is a producer with the ability to bring out hidden potential in unknown bands. While he had been with Jun Hyuk for the past 3 weeks, he had taught him something very important. He had shown Jun Hyuk the importance of the spoken word, which expressed emotions that the chime of instruments and beautiful melodies could not.

Jun Hyuk's singing of murmuring was the perfect song to relay his message.



Jun Hyuk's stage was simple like the atmosphere of the song.

A dark stage. A ray of pin light. Under that, Jun Hyuk sat in a chair with his guitar and sang.

His arpeggio chord and calm singing expressed a bittersweet emotion well.

Kim Ki Sik was slightly surprised while watching this on the monitor. The lighting director had found the perfect point. The pin lighting was showing Jun Hyuk's song.

'This... picture is pretty good.'

Kim Ki Sik was caught up in these thoughts for a moment when he bolted up from his seat. The screen was still and he could not hear anything.

“What is it? What’s happening?”

“That kid. He stopped the song.”

Jun Hyuk had stopped the song and there was only the sound of irregular breathing in the mic. Producer Kim knew what was happening right away. Jun Hyuk was holding back his tears.

“Hang on! Stay still. Don’t go out on the stage and don’t say anything. Hey! Connect me to the judges.”

Kim Ki Sik yelled into the mic.

“Judges, don’t make any sound and stay still. I’ll send a separate signal. Please wait.”

Assistant Producer Pil Jae held out a cellphone.

“Senior, the director called.”

“This bastard! Just hang up!”

Kim Ki Sik held the mic and without blinking, began to direct the cameras like a seasoned director,

“Number 1! Close in on Jun Hyuk’s face. No... don’t go too close. That’s right. Stop. Just like that.”

Jun Hyuk’s face filled the monitor precisely.

“Hey! Pil Jae. Time it. Tell me when 10 seconds passes... Number 3, get Yoon Jung Su’s face. That man is holding back tears too. Hurry.”

Kim Ki Sik counted to three and yelled again,

“Go back to Number 1. Jun Hyuk’s face.”

“Tears... please just one tear.....”

It was Kim Ki Sik's earnest plea. A true tear would touch the viewers' hearts more than a song of Lee So Ra's standard.

"Senior, 10 seconds!"

The assistant producer shouted.

"Okay. Kyung Min, go out and comfort Jun Hyuk."

"Shit, what am I supposed to do?"

MC Moon Kyung Min's swearing came through the earphone.

"I don't know, asshole. You're an MC. Just talk to him... and bring him backstage."

Kim Ki Sik yelled into the mic again,

"Writer Kim! Quickly write something for Kyung Min to say and send it over to him. Give it to him when he brings Jun Hyuk backstage. Hurry!"

"Producer, I'm already writing it. Give me a second..."

When Jun Hyuk heard the youngest writer cry, he bolted up from his seat. He quickly bowed to the judges and audience and rushed off of the stage.

Producer Kim had prayed and prayed, but it had not worked. The camera did not catch Jun Hyuk's tears.

"Oh damn. Kyung Min, come out! There's no script. Ad lib it."

"I'm going to go crazy."

Moon Kyung Min changed his expression from annoyance to regret in an instant and went out on the stage.

"Yes... our Jang Jun Hyuk could not hold back his emotions and... he was unable to finish his song. I guess that means... he was completely immersed in the song. It also means that he sang with that much sincerity."

"Someone help Kyung Min."

As Kim Ki Sik's request came through, Lee Sung Chul took the mic.

"Number 3! Film Sung Chul."

"There are times like that. Like the MC said, there are times when the singer falls to the emotion before it is delivered to the audience. It is a pity. It is evidence that he is not yet a professional. A singer cannot forget that he is a messenger of emotions in any circumstance."

"CM is going out."

He had to turn on the CM to Lee Sung Chul's comments. Everyone needed a short break."

Yes. I see. Then we will continue with the next stage in 1 minute."

Everyone sighed in relief as soon as the commercial went out. The production team, judges, and MC.

"Pil Jae, take the mic. Let me take a break until the next stage."

"Okay."

Kim Ki Sik handed his headset over to Pil Jae and went out to the hallway with a cigarette. Before he could light it however, his cellphone rang loudly.



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